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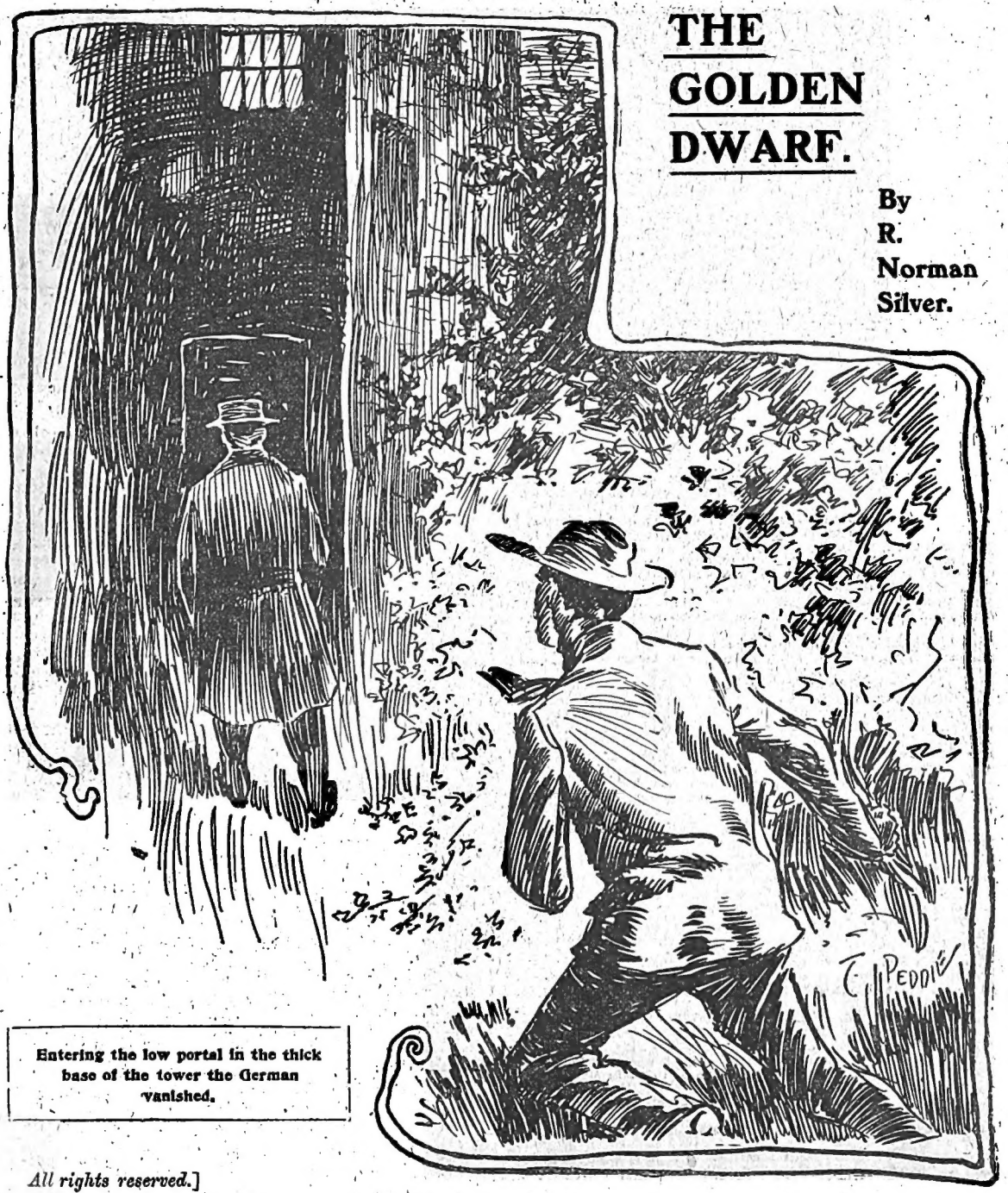
THE GOLDEN DWARF.

By R. Norman Silver.



Entering the low portal in the thick base of the tower the German vanished.

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The Golden Dwarf

A Sensational Romance of To-Day.

By R. NORMAN SILVER.

Author of "A Keeper of Secrets," "Hate, the Destroyer," "A Daughter of Mystery," etc.

SYNOPSIS OF FIRST INSTALMENT OF "GOLDEN DWARF."

"It is the body of Sir Christopher Dering!"

The words are spoken by a pretty girl—fair-haired, blue-eyed. She stands, horrified, by a grass-grown ditch in a country lane, out of which a great mastiff is climbing. The ditch contains the corpse of a stalwart man—a handkerchief bound over his mouth and nostrils.

Close to there is a strange figure, graceful, well-dressed, even handsome, but with the stature of a boy and the face of an adult. He carries a heavy dog-whip, and stares, fixedly, at the dead body just discovered by his mastiff, Cerberus.

The girl is Esther Carew; the dwarf, Otto Hare, the richest landowner in Derbyshire, and the mystery of Wyresdale, a village in that county. For the first time in fifteen years he has set foot in a public thoroughfare, to attract the attention of Esther, whom he has watched from his park.

Sir Christopher Dering was alive at seven o'clock the preceding day. He and his nephew, Felix, had quarrelled over the latter's love for Esther. Sir Christopher wanted Felix to make a good marriage—the birth of his little cousin Brian has put him out of the succession to the baronetcy. Felix is faithful to the penniless Esther Carew.

Much turns on the whereabouts of Felix on the night before. It appears that he was in Duchester, some miles off, whither he went on business, and spent a night at the theatre. Could he have killed the squire?

Otto Hare would like to suggest that he did—Esther's mercenary mother accepts his hints. She wants the Golden Dwarf for a son-in-law.

Felix is secretly loved by Judith Garland, a striking brunette, Lady Dering's companion. She has a wastrel brother, Neal, who is unaccountably in Wyresdale, and who is demanding money. This, by an affectation of sisterly solicitude, Judith obtains, as a cheque, from Felix Dering. The cheque is payable to bearer.

Otto Hare has an ally, a strange German physician, Joseph Kraft, who lives with him at Wyresdale Park, the Golden Dwarf's residence. He is an object of much curiosity to Archibald Geddes, a clever assistant at the Wyresdale Pharmacy, which is kept by a drunken old chemist, Caleb Forester.

Caleb has a charming daughter, Connie, whom Geddes is making bashful love to. She is Esther's friend, and quarrels with Geddes for crediting the rumour that Felix killed his uncle.

A one-armed sailor has suddenly appeared in Wyresdale. At the chemist's shop he encounters Kraft, whom he follows, and on the strength of some past episode attempts to blackmail. Kraft repulses him, but is dexterously tracked by the sailor to a curious fort-like structure in Wyresdale Park.

While spying on this the sailor is attacked by a huge dog, which he stabs. He is seen by Kraft and the Golden Dwarf.

Esther tells Felix of her mother's plan to marry her to Otto Hare. They swear constancy in an old and picturesque oath. Felix returns to Dering House, to be asked by the child Brian if it is true Felix has taken his father away.

Judith Garland shows Felix several links of a chain he has been in the habit of wearing. They are bloodstained. She adds that they were found near the cross roads, where Sir Christopher's body was discovered, and that, moreover, Felix was seen near the place at ten o'clock on the night when he was supposed to be in Duchester. She assures him she will keep his secret.

Felix in vain protests his innocence. At this moment an inspector of the local police is announced.

Felix Dering staggers—is he dreaming, the prey of some hideous nightmare?

A caution sounds in his ears; Judith Garland is speaking to him. "Don't look like that," she whispers, "pull yourself together."

CHAPTER IV.

Dr. Kraft Takes a Walk.

"Curse it, why am I not like other men? The girl loathes me, Kraft; I can see it in her face."

The Golden Dwarf flung himself pettishly into a leather-covered lounge—spattered from end to end with the grey ash of consumed tobacco. He had just entered the private sitting-room of the singular German physician whom he had permanently installed at Wyresdale Park.

Joseph Kraft looked shrewdly at his diminutive patron. The elephantine figure of the German was extended in a creaking wicker-chair, a cigar in a corner of his big mouth. On his knee was an oblong cage, of wire and wood, empty. Its late tenants, a dozen small and gaily-coloured tropical birds, were fluttering about his massive head and clean-shaven visage.

"That is better," he retorted, in his deep bass, holding out a fat finger for a parroquet to perch on; "than if she should despise you. My birds feared me to begin with; now their affection begins to grow, as flowers in sunshine. Sugar-plums, flattery, and good-temper have made them mine. So you must tame the love-bird Esther."

He laid down his Havana and put a glossy rape-seed between his lips—the parroquet flew on to his chin and picked the dainty out of his mouth. The German smiled and started to hum a tune. Presently he broke into the words,

"It was upon a Monday,
Upon a Monday free,
That Mynheer Jacob van Artevelde
Unto his men said he:"

Otto Hare fidgeted impatiently. "Confound your new pets, Kraft," he interrupted; "they have begun to get on my nerves. If you would christen one of them Felix Dering and wring its neck, it might reconcile me to the rest."

Joseph Kraft smiled genially and clapped his great hands. With a babel of shrill chirpings, the flock of birds wheeled about him for a moment, and then settled in the cage. Their owner secured it, and placed the receptacle on a stand. The German was singing a fresh stanza of the curious Flemish ditty:

"And when he came to Bruges town,
The meisjes sprang from bed,
And found Mynheer van Artevelde
With a cross-bolt through his head."

Dr. Kraft spun round and commenced to rub his plump palms together.

"The Golden Dwarf" is simply enthralling.

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"So you are still hungry for the blood of Mr. Felix Dering," he said. "My impulsive friend, have I not shown you a better way? Did you carry out my instructions touching your visit this afternoon to the worthy Mrs. Carew?"

The Golden Dwarf produced a flat gold case and lighted a cigarette.

"To the letter," he answered. "I represented Wyresdale as ringing with the suggestion that Dering was accountable for his uncle's death, Sir Christopher and he having quarrelled the day previous to the discovery of the body. I also permitted my interest in Esther to be seen, and felt Mrs. Carew's pulse as to Dering's connection with her daughter. You were right; the mother will work for me. She threw Dering over without hesitation."

Kraft started to gather up a batch of papers that littered a writing-table hard by. The apartment in which the two men were conversing was large and bright, yet phenomenally untidy, and spattered everywhere with cigar ash. Chemical flasks, jars, and test-tubes stood about, books mingled with manuscripts on shelves and carpet, and a fireproof safe, open, showed its pale green interior between the windows. Outside were the velvet lawns and thick plantations of Wyresdale Park.

"Am I not always right?" observed the German, responding to the other's final sentence. "My dear Hare, you perceive in me your benevolent fairy godfather. Strongly as I disapprove of your sudden passion for this girl, from the instant I saw she was necessary to your happiness I determined, at all costs, to bring about your marriage with her. Who but I warned you that Dering was your rival, who but I pointed out the possibility of connecting him with his uncle's murder?"

The Golden Dwarf rose and contemplated his mentor cynically; Otto Hare's tiny frame and proud features lent a certain grace to his scornful attitude.

"Fairy godfather or familar demon," he said; "I care not which you are, Kraft, provided you win me Esther Carew for my wife."

"It shall be done," declared Joseph Kraft, shaking his papers into order; "you must have a little patience, that is all. But to business; you have not glanced at my notes for days."

He held out a bundle of sheets, covered closely by lines of cipher, resembling the hieroglyphics of a stenographer, or those of some Oriental script. Otto Hare waved the folios aside.

"I am in no humour for work," he replied; "I shall go and look at the dogs."

Kraft was locking away his papers in the safe.

"A love-sick man desires solitude," he commented briefly; "so be it."

The Golden Dwarf lit another cigarette.

"I wish," he muttered, "we could discover the blackguard who stabbed Cerberus. He had only a single arm, I thought."

Joseph Kraft laughed uneasily.

"A trick of perspective," he said; "I myself saw both his arms. Some poacher probably."

"What was a poacher doing near the——?" asked Otto Hare, significantly, and leaving the query unfinished.

Kraft turned and chirruped to his birds.

"You are not yourself, my dear Hare," he decided; "if I did not know you to be suffering from the tender passion, I should say you were getting—morbid."

The Golden Dwarf shrugged his shoulders and left the room without answering. Joseph Kraft paused reflectively in the middle of the apartment, the late sunshine gleaming on the lenses of his wide spectacles.

"Otto, my friend," he murmured; "you are becoming more difficult to drive on what you call a loose rein. Well, I have a strong wrist and I fancy the tackles will hold. But, you must have no doubt upon this point—the man who dispatched the unpleasant Cerberus had two arms—oh, yes, he had two arms, beyond question. If you believed otherwise, now that you have returned to the external world, Otto, and were to notice in Wyresdale a seafaring person with one arm, you would have a bad attack of that stupid English disease, the 'funk.' And then you might take the bit between your white teeth and all my two years of labour would go for nothing. Perhaps, Otto, it is fortunate you are in love—it will occupy your mind."

He donned his soft straw hat, twisted the key in the door of the chamber, pocketed the complicated steel trifle, and walked downstairs—his private room was on an upper floor of the Golden Dwarf's huge residence.

The house itself was a white stone building, with a classic portico, marble steps, and two tall and shallow wings. It was elevated on a terrace, reached by a sweeping double file of Scotch firs.

Dr. Joseph Kraft did not follow the course of the avenue, but struck off, at his rapid, noiseless gait, toward the southern limit of the park.

Soon he attained the blunt green hill on whose slope was erected the peculiar structure—resembling, but for its tower, a species of fort—that had excited the curiosity of Nicholas Foley, the one-armed sailor.

Entering the low portal in the thick base of the tower, the German vanished.

When he reappeared again, it was to walk with a slower stride and his hands behind his back, as if lost in meditation. Reaching the wicket in the ring-fence of Otto Hare's domains, he passed through it, and continued his saunter in the direction of the cross-roads.

As he strolled down the narrowest of the ways, he came in front of a dilapidated cottage with a thatched roof. It boasted a strip of garden, and in this, at a bed near the gate, a man was wielding a short fork. The digger had a cropped bullet-head, a bronzed skin, and a limp sleeve—the sign of a missing arm—pinned to his jacket. He was none other than the sailor, Nicholas Foley.

Straightening himself to breathe, he beheld the flapping frock-coat and straw hat of Dr. Kraft. A grin wrinkled his tanned countenance.

"Mornin', Dutchy," he cried; "how goes it?"

Kraft glanced at him and frowned; the sailor came to the gate and leaned over.

"I've settled down quite close to your swagger lodging, Dutchy," he said; "so's to keep an eye on you. Got these moorings on the cheap; I'm putting in a few sallids."

He motioned the German to draw closer.

"How did the little chap take my dishing his bow-wow yesterday?" queried Nicholas Foley, touching the buck-horn haft of a clasp-knife that projected from a wide, buttoned pocket on the front of his hip; "you twigged me, didn't you? I knew you'd not put the coppers on me yourself, but them little men are rumbustious when they're roused, so I sheered off."

Dr. Kraft gazed undecidedly at the sailor; his pale yellow orbs seemed to fix in a spasm of intense reverie. Nicholas Foley threw the gate ajar.

"Suppose you come in, Dutchy," he offered; "and we can have a talk over old times, the old times I'm so willing to keep quiet about—at a price."

Kraft weighed the proposal. Then, his hands still knitted at his back, he marched up the cramped path and into the cottage. The sailor followed him; on the threshold he halted and unbuttoned his pocket, so that the buck-horn haft of his clasp-knife was within easy reach of his brown fingers. This done, he entered. The latch snapped behind him.

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CHAPTER V.

In which an Arrest is Made.

"Inspector Brasher to see you, sir."

The message was brought to Felix Dering as he stood in the entrance hall of Dering House with Judith Garland by him. Her whispered counsel: "Pull yourself together!" still rang ominously upon his ear. Like a man half awake he stepped forward, Judith following him.

The inspector saluted with every appearance of respect. He was a young and semi-military type, smarter than the average county police-officer.

"Sorry to trouble you at such a moment, Mr. Dering," he said; "but the fact is, I've a warrant for the arrest of the man we suspect of the late Sir Christopher's murder. And thinking it would be preferable to nab him quietly, I asked for a short interview with you."

"Who—who is the person you wish to apprehend?" stammered Felix, trying in vain to control his voice—the shock so recently dealt him by Judith Garland's bewildering allegation had left him tremulous and unnerved.

Inspector Brasher dropped his own crisp accents to a confidential murmur.

"It's—it's a groom on the establishment here," he answered; "Edward Spencer, commonly known as Ted. The late Sir Christopher, we believe, gave him a month's notice only a week ago, Mr. Dering—Spencer is stated to have been lurking in the neighbourhood of the cross-roads the evening prior to the discovery of the body."

Felix Dering felt that a great weight had been lifted from his shoulders. He heaved a sigh of relief, Judith Garland, who had heard all, knitted her dark brows and showed her even teeth in a flash of annoyance. Then she smiled—a slow, terrible smile. Some sudden and reassuring thought might have passed through her mind, so satisfied became the expression on her handsome features.

"Now, if I may trouble you to send for Spencer," proceeded the inspector; "as though to make some arrangement or issue some order, I can secure him without a fuss in domestic quarters. Perhaps, however, the lady had better retire." And he glanced critically at Judith.

"I will advise it," said Felix, and he went to the side of the woman who, but a few moments earlier, had been showing him that strange piece of evidence which was to connect him with the murder of his uncle.

"The officer thinks that it will be as well," he observed coldly, for he guessed that she had been listening, "if you are not present when Spencer is arrested."

She looked at him, amused, and raising a firm small hand, opened it slightly. In her palm there lay the blood-stained links, whose terrible import she had been so brutally explaining to him upon the arrival of the inspector.

"For your sake," she said, under her breath, "I am glad the police have picked up this absurd scent. It makes you safe—safe from all but me. And I am your friend, am I not, on conditions."

She moved to the window-seat, from which position of vantage the child Brian was studying the stalwart frame and trim uniform of Inspector Brasher. Picking up the little baronet, she carried him off, a gliding, elastic figure in her black dinner-dress. Felix Dering rang for a servant (the inspector's tall form had stepped hastily into a recess below the stairs), and bade him light the great chandelier that hung from the roof. This preliminary over, he summoned the groom who was the object of Inspector Brasher's diplomacy.

While he waited for the appearance of the youth, once, in spite of the three months' notice mentioned by the inspector, Sir Christopher's favourite attendant Felix Dering was wrestling with a score of perplexing problems.

How had that broken portion of his watch-chain come into the possession of Judith Garland? He had caught his guard by chance upon the stile at the cross-roads, when vaulting the ragged bar, and had torn, at the same time, the flesh of his palm. Touching the severed chain with blood-besmeared fingers, he must have left on it a terribly suggestive stain, before several of the dangling links, strained at some unperceived point, had fallen to the earth.

Improbable though the explanation seemed, it was true. But why did Judith say he had been seen in the vicinity of the cross-roads that night—the night he was supposed to be in Duchester?" A grey pallor fell on the countenance of Felix Dering, and he shuddered.

He was roused from his meditation by a brisk step, and a sharp "Yes, sir": he looked up. A bright young fellow stood before him, fair, and hazel-eyed, with a ruddy complexion, and clad in a neat, plain suit of tweeds. It was Ted Spencer, a cheerful Irishman, who had been on the best of terms with everyone at Dering House, including, as a rule, the irascible Sir Christopher.

Felix Dering shrank back, sickened by the part the inspector had caused him to play. The groom stood at ease, a trifle puzzled. A tap on his shoulder made him start, there was a double *click!* and the Irishman's wrists were in steel fetters.

"Edward Spencer," intimated Inspector Brasher, the author of this disconcerting achievement, "I arrest you on a warrant. You are charged with the murder of Sir Christopher Dering. It is my duty to warn you that anything you say may be taken down and used in evidence against you."

The groom flung out his gyved arms towards Felix.

"I am innocent, sir," he cried, "I swear it. I was at the spot that night—I am walking out with Barbara, Mrs. Carew's maid, the Rosery is close to the cross-roads. And I did see something I would have told, sir, if I hadn't been a bit of a coward after all the talk about the murder, and that was a man, the very spit of Sir Christopher, sitting on a hor e as though he were ill, and another man leading it by the bridle. I might have followed, sir, but Barbara had promised to meet me, and I didn't like to risk missing her."

The words sounded sincere enough, and they filled Felix Dering with a paralysing amazement. What enigma lay behind the murder of his uncle? Could he, indeed, have been killed by this pleasant Irish lad, with the frank, hazel eyes, and the brown cheeks, and if not, by whose hand had he been done to death in the mysterious hours that lay between his departure from Wyresdale Park and the discovery of his lifeless body in the ditch near the gate of Mrs. Carew s villa? Was there in the groom's tale of a horse, a swaying rider, and an unknown guide at the bridle, more than the glib equivocation of an accused criminal?

"Don't look at me like that, Mr. Felix," pleaded Ted Spencer; "I can't bear it; I wouldn't have harmed a hair of the squire's head for worlds. I—I——"

He faltered and hid his face.

"It'll kill my Barbara when she hears I'm taken," he moaned.

Felix Dering flung off his absorption.

"I do not think you guilty, Spencer," he said, "and you shall have every chance to clear yourself, for Barbara's sake."

"Thank you, sir," muttered the Irishman; "thank you kindly; can't I be rid of these, sir?" he showed the polished fetters on his wrists; "I'll go peaceful with the officer."

Felix glanced at the inspector, but that authority made a curt sign in the negative.

"Hurry up, Spencer," he added; "I've a constable outside and we'll ju-t walk you down to the station without any show—it's dusk already. Keep a good heart; you're

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not guilty till you've been tried and sentenced. And, for the credit of Wyresdale, I'm sure I hope you'll prove yourself innocent."

With this concession the severe Brasher and his *aide* led away their prisoner, after borrowing a cap for him from the rack in the hall. They left Felix Dering a prey to the most utter bewilderment.

"I, Felix Dering, promise."
"I, Esther Carew, promise."

Down the shadowy avenue the two police-officers and the groom proceeded at a melancholy pace. The evening was closing in, the western sky aflame with the hues of the rainbow, and the cool air of the gloaming perfumed by the thousand gentle odours of July.

Near the lodge-gates the Irishman halted and spoke.

"Put my handkerchief so it'll cover these irons," he said; "I can hold an end in my fingers, natural-like."

The inspector sniffed, but acted upon the petition, nevertheless. Ted Spencer murmured a grateful acknowledgement and resumed his despondent advance.

Reaching the lane beyond, the three stalked towards the cross-roads Their route lay beside the fence of Nicholas Foley's cottage.

The sailor, at his wicket, was just bidding farewell to a tall personage in a frock-coat and straw hat.

"Good evening, Doctor," vouchsafed the chief of the officers, striding by.

Joseph Kraft started, and bowed, lifting a plump forefinger to his temple. Then he, also, passed on, glancing curiously at the groom and his escort.

Nicholas Foley stared after the trio.

"Cussed if that son of a gun hadn't the darbies on," he said to himself, and, pulling to the door of his cottage, ran up the lane.

Seeking a short cut athwart the grassy margin of the lane, he stumbled and fell.

The obstacle which had brought him to the ground was a human leg that had been pushed through a gap in the fence. The rest of the body appeared, hastily crawling backwards from a neighbouring meadow on to the wayside.

Nicholas Foley had bounded to his feet in an instant. As he perceived the unwitting cause of his accident, he cried out bluntly:

"Hullo, messmate, do you steer starn foremost for choice?"

The fellow addressed sat up.

It was Neal Garland, and the sailor saw his evil countenance. Nicholas Foley gasped.

"Keelhaul me for a landlubber!" he exclaimed; "if it isn't the swab that struck the match at the stile. Here, my hearty, what was it you picked up yonder and gave to the taut little craft you had with you?"

CHAPTER VI.

The Station Strong-room.

"No, I'm not given to taking prejudices, Miss Connie, but I must say I can't endure that man Brasher. He's as opinionated as he's presumptuous and as presumptuous as he's opinionated."

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Constance Forester laughed. She was strolling by the side of Archibald Geddes—the clever young Scotch chemist who was her father's assistant—through a field of ripening corn. The chime of the bells from the spire of the parish church and the height of the sun in a cloudless sky marked the advance of the peaceful Sabbath towards its noon.

"The dead set he's made at poor Spencer," went on Geddes, in his dry, resentful tone; "is simply ridiculous. If the lad's had one month's notice from Sir Christopher he's had a score. He used to come to the shop for Lady Dering's medicines and tell me jokingly, 'I'm on a month's notice again, Mr. Geddes,' or 'I'm stopping to show how I behave myself.' The squire had his peculiarities like the rest of us, and it's absurd to imagine that Spencer would lie in wait for Sir Christopher and knock him over the head on account of a dismissal he'd no call to take seriously. Don't you think so yourself, Miss Connie?"

Connie plucked a blade of corn and trifled with the yellowing seeds. "Inspector Brasher is supposed to be very clever," she answered mischievously.

"Ay," said the Scotchman, "and it's fools that do the supposing. What's his theory of the matter? That Spencer, out of revenge, surprised the squire riding home, hit him on the back of the skull with a club, dragged him to the ground, and finished him off by suffocating him with a handkerchief and rifling his pockets to make the thing look like highway robbery. As I've explained to you, Miss Connie, it's perfectly obvious that the squire was struck when he was lying down. The fracture proves it."

"Why don't you offer to give evidence, then?" queried Connie, regarding him with a certain admiration, and shaking out the filmy skirts of her best frock.

Archibald Geddes shrugged his shoulders. "And ruin our prescription business," he said. "Didn't old Doctor Vavasour perform the post-mortem, and doesn't he agree entirely with the Inspector. They wouldn't hear me if I asked to go into the box. I'm not a surgical expert, I'm a chemist. And then, Miss Connie, I've another reason for holding my tongue—and that's your father."

Constance Forester started—her brown eyes widened and her cheeks blanched.

"What *can* you mean, Mr. Geddes?" she faltered.

The Scotchman lowered his voice and bent towards the pretty person near him.

"I'm afraid Mr. Forester knows more about this affair of Sir Christopher's death than he chooses to allow," responded Archibald Geddes significantly. "Haven't you noticed how he avoids the subject, how he insisted—until Ted Spencer was dragged into the case—that the motive was robbery and nothing else. He must have come past the Cross that night, for he was drinking at the Wheatsheaf, and I have managed to find out quietly that he left at ten. He did not arrive home, as you know, till after twelve."

Connie shivered. "You—you don't suspect him, really, Mr. Geddes," she stammered.

"No," admitted the chemist, "but there is an offence termed being an accessory after the fact, and it may receive a rather severe punishment. I don't say that Mr. Forester has rendered himself liable to the law in any degree. The whole thing is a riddle. But in view of your father's singular embarrassment when Sir Christopher's death is referred to, and his inexplicable delay in arriving at the High Street when he set out from the Wheatsheaf an hour earlier than usual, I have not wished to draw attention to us at all in connection with the mystery. I only mention it to you lest you might speak casually of Mr. Forester's movements that evening."

Constance put a hand upon the Scotchman's arm. "Thank you, Mr. Geddes," she murmured, "you are very kind—very, very kind. I don't know what would become of me if you weren't here to protect father against himself and to take care of the shop."

"I've done nothing to deserve your thanks, Miss Connie," dissented Archibald Geddes, "it's pure selfishness, and the pleasure of having you smile at me occasionally as you go by the counter. I was afraid I'd angered you the other day by speaking of the rumour in Wyresdale about Mr. Dering and the squire's murder."

"Forgive me for being so impolite," whispered Connie penitently, "but I could not bear to hear you talk of that horrible slander. You see, Esther—I should say Miss Carew—and Mr. Dering are practically engaged. But the police evidently don't attach any importance to the horrid idea, and we'll pretend we never heard of it, won't we? I tried to believe Mr. Brasher was right over Ted Spencer because it cleared Mr. Dering."

Archibald Geddes coughed nervously.

"I've a confession to make, Miss Connie," he said, "I've been running down Brasher for a bumptious ass, and so I dare be sworn he is. But the conviction is not a disinterested one on my part. You'll remember he's been paying you a good many compliments lately—buying useless soaps and scents from us and hanging round to pass the time of day with you. I'm jealous of him, Miss Connie, and that's why I've been defaming his character and speaking evil of dignities."

Constance flushed charmingly and dropped, in her agitation, the stalk of corn she had been depriving of its burden.

"You are very foolish, Mr. Geddes," she murmured.

"Maybe," replied the chemist, "but such folly is an infallible sign of a certain ailment that I'm suffering from. Mr. Brasher is a taller man than I am, and a bigger man, and he has a fine black beard and a fist that would fell a heifer. And I'm given to understand that these are things the ladies admire."

"I don't admire them, Mr. Geddes," said Connie, "and I'm positive the inspector doesn't know half so much as you do."

"You're right," conceded the Scotchman gravely, "Brasher is nothing but a constable in a hurry. I may be slow, Miss Connie, but I am sure. For three months now, I wondered if I was in love; at last I've made up my mind, I am."

Hedrew a step closer to the listener, and, twitching his wrist free of his starched cuff sought deliberately to embrace her. Connie slipped from him; a brace of figures were approaching them. Archibald Geddes recognised the slight form of Esther Carew. By her was Felix Dering.

"Good morning, Geddes," observed the latter, raising his hat to Connie.

The chemist returned the greeting imperturbably, and added a bow for Felix's companion. This recognition completed, the two pairs of lovers took to different paths, with an unsuccessful attempt at a calm demeanour. A lightning glance had been exchanged by Connie and Esther, a look of bantering feminine sympathy. Then a hedge intervened and separated the couples.

"You and little Miss Forester are still as firm friends as ever?" queried Felix, stooping once more to the pink ear and fair curls of Esther Carew.

"Yes," said Esther; "Connie is a brave girl—Mrs. Forester is dead, and her father drinks, yet she never despairs. I fancy she is beginning to care for Mr. Geddes, though she will not own it."

"Lucky Geddes!" answered Felix. "Nothing stands between him and happiness, while it seems as if the fates themselves were plotting to keep us asunder. Here am I detained indefinitely at Wyresdale by the murder of my uncle, which has not only threatened to cast upon me the shadow of a crime Heaven knows I did not commit, but

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has led you to become acquainted with Otto Hare, and so has excited a pitiless ambition in your mother's breast. Would I had left Wyresdale three months ago!"

Esther clung to him as they wandered through the wide expanse of standing grain. A quarter rang musically from the distant church—a lark's shrill song descended to them out of the blue.

"There is a detail of my perplexity, Esther," pursued Felix Dering, "that I have not so far confided to you. It may save us both greater pain if I anticipate the disclosure from some other lips. Yesterday, at the opening of the inquest, I answered the formal questions that were put to me. I could not feel it wise to volunteer a dangerous admission. Esther, I was not in Duchester the whole of that fatal night. After dining I visited the theatre, it is true; but the play was the *Shaughraun*, and the sorrows of Eily sent my thoughts flying to you. As if I were a romantic boy, I left my stall, and struck athwart the fields from Duchester, to catch a glimpse of your window. I may have been in the neighbourhood when my uncle was attacked."

Esther Carew had grown very pale; a sudden chill swept over her as she realised that circumstance had woven yet another sombre strand about their destinies.

"I am glad you told me," she murmured, "but sorry it was for me you did what might cause people to suspect you." She choked down a sob. "I would give my life for you, dear," she faltered, "and I am the very one who contrives to do you most harm. You quarrelled with Sir Christopher over me, and if you had not come back that evening, you would be able to vindicate yourself against the spiteful stories which Mr. Hare repeated to mamma."

"Mr. Hare," exclaimed Felix, "yes; I had forgotten. He would be willing enough to employ the slander against his rival. Esther, has your mother no heart? She encouraged our affection from the beginning; she knows that we have ended by being all in all to one another, and yet she schemes to give you to this—this Golden Dwarf, because his riches balance, and more than balance, his affliction."

Esther drooped, in her muslin gown, like some frail plant.

"Mamma is very cruel," she sighed pathetically; "but I will be faithful to you, Felix. They shall not compel me to marry Mr. Hare."

A luxuriant thorn-bush screened the couple at the moment; Felix seized the opportunity to clasp his betrothed to his breast.

"We are told," he said, "that all evils are powerless to withstand love, if it *be* love. We must prove the proverb to the hilt; while we live we will be loyal. See!"

He broke a twig from the thorn-bush and gave her an extremity to hold.

Grasping the nearer tip he snapped the thin branch in twain.

"It is an old charm," he commented; "these are the words of the vow: 'Till this severed wood unite and bear leaf and flower, we promise fidelity, each to each.' Let us take it. I, Felix Dering, promise."

"I, Esther Carew, promise," gasped Esther, and burst into a fit of scalding tears.

Felix had much ado to comfort her, nor could he easily be brought to comprehend the unnerving effect of the picturesque oath upon the sensitive girl whose innocent soul had long since given itself to him.

While they talked, in the fond simplicity of their grief, a voice summoned Felix Dering. The tones were those of Archibald Geddes.

"Excuse me, Mr. Dering," he said, appearing round the thorn-bush—he had abandoned Connie and pursued them along the winding footpath to their retreat—"but a curious event has happened, and Inspector Brasher, at the police-station in the High Street, is half crazy. If you don't mind stepping down, as a gentleman of position in the neighbourhood——"

He paused, keenly regarding the countenance of Felix Dering.

"Certainly," responded Felix; "forgive me, Miss Carew, if I leave you without ceremony."

Esther replied by a veiled and tender look, and the two men set off together.

"What is the nature of the accident?" inquired Felix; as they strode along.

"I didn't say it was an accident," declared Archibald Geddes, drily; "and I want just to let the situation burst on you, sir."

Felix Dering wondered, but allowed himself to be hastened forward.

At the entrance of the Wyresdale police-station there was an excited crowd.

Felix pushed through it, escorted by his guide, and gained the principal apartment.

The door of the lock-up was ajar, Geddes marched in, nodding to a stolid constable, who gravely saluted Felix Dering.

The chemist pointed to a window, devised at an unusual elevation in the wall of the strong-room. But a solitary shaft of iron remained to testify that the aperture had been barred; a dozen bricks had vanished from the lintel.

"Brasher fastened Ted Spencer in here on Saturday," said Archibald Geddes, studying the expression on Felix Dering's startled face; "this morning he was gone and the window as it is now. Someone got the bars loose from outside—who, is what the Inspector would like to know."

(*To be continued.*)

"YOU say he is a director in a newspaper publishing company?" "Yes, he directs the wrappers for the out-of-town subscribers."

NORA: "One week from to-night I will give you my answer." Eugene: "Goodness! What am I to do in the meantime?" Nora: "You might make yourself agreeable to my parents."

"YOUR husband is not looking well to-night, Mrs. Rhymer. Has he been overworking himself?" "It isn't that so much; it is his originality. Why, that man is struck by so many original ideas that his mind must be one mass of bruises."

"I HAVE a handsome home," he suggested. "With all the modern conveniences?" she asked. "No-o," he answered slowly; "not all. One is lacking." "What is it?" she inquired. "A wife," he replied. Then she managed to convey the assurance to him that one was to be had for the asking.

CUSTOMER: "Why haven't you called upon me for that little bill I owe you?" Grocer: "Oh, I make it a rule never to ask a gentleman for money." Customer: "Indeed! But suppose a man is indebted to you and doesn't pay?" Grocer: "Well, after a certain length of time I conclude that he is not a gentleman; then I ask him."

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE.

An important announcement will be made in this column next week.

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FOUR LIVES IN ONE.

A Tale of Transanimation.

THERE was something about the wholesome sleepiness of Freiberg, in Saxony, that fitted well with the lazy nature of Ronald Wyde. So, having run down there to spend a day or two among the students and the mines, and taking a liking to the quaint, unmodernised town, he boldly changed his plans of autumn travel, gave up a cherished scheme of Russian vagabondage, had his baggage sent from Dresden, and made ready to settle down and drowse away three or four months in idleness and not over-arduous study. And this move of his led to the happening of a very strange and seemingly unreal event in his life.

Ronald Wyde was then about twenty-five or six years old, rather above the medium height, with thick blue-black hair that he had an artist-trick of allowing to ripple down to his neck, dark hazel eyes that were almost too deeply recessed in their bony orbits, and a troublesome growth of beard that, close-shaven as he always was, showed in strong blue outline through the thin and rather sallow skin.

His address was singularly pleasing, and his wide experience of life, taught him by years of varied travel, made him a good deal of a cosmopolitan in his views and ways, which caused him to be looked upon as a not over-safe companion for young men of his own age or under.

Having made up his mind to winter in Freiberg, his first step was to quit the little hotel, with its mouldy stone-vaulted entrance and its columned dining-room, under whose full-centred arches close, beery, and smoky fumes lingered persistently, and seek quieter student-lodgings in the heart of the town.

His choice was mainly influenced by a thin-railed balcony, twined through and through by the shoots of a vigorous Virginia creeper that flamed and flickered in the breezy October sunsets in strong relief against the curtains that drifted whitely out and in through the open window.

So, with the steady-going and hale old Frau Spritzkrapfen he took up his quarters, fully persuading himself that he did so for the sake of the stray home-breaths that seemed to stir the scarlet vine-leaves more gently for him, and ignoring pretty Lottchen's great, earnest Saxon eyes as best he could.

A sunny morning followed his removal to Frau Spritzkrapfen's tidy home.

There had been a slight rain in the early night, and the footways were yet bright and moist in patches, that the slanting morning rays were slowly coaxing away.

Ronald Wyde, having set his favourite books handily on the dimity-draped table, which comprised for him the process of getting to rights, and having given more than one glance of amused wonderment at the naïve blue-and-white scriptural tiles that cased his cumbrous four-storey, earthenware stove, and smiled lazily at poor Adam's obvious and sudden indigestion, even while the uneaten half-apple remained in his guilty hand, he stepped out on his balcony, leaned his elbows among the crimson leaves, and took in the healthful morning air in great draughts. It was a Sunday; the bells of the gray minster hard by were iterating their clanging calls to the simple townsfolk to come and be droned to in sleepy German gutturals from the carved pillar-hung pulpit inside. Looking down he saw thick-ankled women cluttering past in loose wooden-soled shoes, and dumpy girls with tow braids primly dangling to their hips, convoying sturdy Dutch-built luggers of younger brothers up the easy slope that led to the church and the bells. Presently Frau Spritzkrapfen and dainty Lottchen, rosy with soap and health, slipped through the doorway beneath him out into the little church-bound throng, and, as they disappeared, left the house and street somehow unaccountably alone. Feeling this, Ronald Wyde determined on a stroll.

Something in the Sabbath stillness around him led Ronald away from the swift clang and throbbing hum of the bells and in the direction of the old cemetery. Passing through the clumsy tower-gate that lifts its grimy bulk sullenly, like a huge head-stone over the grave of a dead time of feudalism, he reached the burial-ground and entered the quiet enclosure.

The usual touching reverence of the Germans for their dead was strikingly manifest around him. The humbler mounds, walled up with rough stones a foot or two above the pathway level, carried on their crests little gardens of gay and inexpensive plants; while on the tall wooden crosses at their head hung yellow wreaths, half hiding the hopeful legend, "Wiedersehen."

The more pretentious slabs bore vases filled with fresh flowers; while in the grate-barred vaults, that skirted the ground like the arches of a cloister, lay rusty heaps of long-since mouldered bloom, topped by newer wreaths tossed lovingly in to wilt and turn to dust in their turn, like those cast in before them in memory of that other dust asleep below.

Turning aside from the central walk that halved the cemetery, Ronald strolled along, his hands in his pockets, his eyes listlessly fixed on the orange-coloured fumes and rolling smoke that welled out of tall chimneys in the hollow beyond, an idle student tune humming on his lips, and his thoughts nowhere and everywhere at once. Happening to look away from the dun smoke-trail for an instant, he found something of greater interest close at hand. An old man stooped stiffly over a simple mound, busied among the flowers that hid it, and by his side crouched a young girl, perhaps fourteen years old, who peered up at Ronald with questioning velvet brown eyes. The old man heard the intruder's steps crunching in the damp gravel, and slowly looked up too.

"Good-morning, mein Herr," said Ronald, pleasantly.

The old man remained for an instant blinking nervously and shading his eyes from the full sunlight that fell on his face. A quiet face it was and very old, seamed and creased by mazy wrinkles that played at aimless cross purposes with each other, beginning and

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ending nowhere. His thick beard and thin, curved nose looked just a little Jewish, and seemed at variance with his pale blue eyes that were still bright in spite of age. And yet, bearded as he was, there was a lurking expression about his features that bordered upon effeminacy, and made the treble of his voice sound even more thin and womanish as he answered Wyde's greeting.

"Good-morning, too, mein Herr. A stranger to our town, I see."

"Yes; but soon not to be called one, I hope. I am here for the winter."

"A cold season—a cold season; our northern winters are very chilling to an old man's blood." And slouching together into a tired stoop, he resumed his simple task of knotting a few flowers into a clumsy nosegay. Ronald stood and watched him with a vague interest. Presently, the flowers being clumped to his liking, the old man pried himself upright by getting a good purchase with his left hand in the small of his back, and so deliberately that Ronald almost fancied he heard him creak. The girl rose too, and drew her thin shawl over her shoulders.

"You Germans love longer than we," said Ronald, glancing at the flowers that trembled in the old man's bony fingers, and then downward to the quiet grave; "a lifetime of easy-going love and a year or two of easier forgetting are enough for us."

"Should I forget my own flesh and blood?" asked the old man simply.

Ronald paused a moment, and, pointing downward, said:

"Your daughter, then, I fancy?"

"Yes."

"Long dead?"

"Very long; more than fifty years."

Ronald stared, but said nothing audibly. Inwardly he whispered something about being devilish glad to make the wandering Jew's acquaintance, rattled the loose grōschen in his pocket, and turned to follow the tottering old man and firm footed child down the walk.

After a dozen paces they halted before a more ambitious tombstone, on which Ronald could make out the well-remembered name of Plattner.

The child took the flowers and laid them reverently on the stone.

"It seems to me almost like arriving at the end of a pilgrimage," said Ronald, "when I stand by the grave of a man of science. Perhaps you knew him, mein Herr."

"He was my pupil."

The old man heard the intruder's steps crunching on the damp gravel, and slowly looked up too.

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"Whew!" thought Ronald; "that makes my friend here a centenarian at least."

"My pupil and my friend," the feeble voice went on; "and more than that, my daughter's first lover, and only one."

"Ach so!" said Ronald.

"And now on her death-day, I take these poor flowers from her to him, as I have done all these years."

Something in the pathetic earnestness of his companion touched Ronald Wyde, and he forthwith took his hands out of his pockets, and didn't try to whistle—which was a great deal for him to do.

"I know Plattner well by his works," he said; "I once studied mineralogy for nearly a month."

"You love science, then?"

"Yes; like everything else, for diversion."

"It was different with him," quavered the old man, pointing unsteadily to the head-stone. "Science grew to be his one passion, and many discoveries rewarded him for his devotion. He was groping on the track of a far greater achievement when he died."

"May I ask what it was?" said Ronald, now fairly interested.

"The creation and isolation of the principle of Life!"

This was too much for Ronald Wyde; down dived his restless hands into his trousers' pockets again, and the gröschen rattled as merrily as before.

"I have made quite a study of biology, and all that sort of thing," said he; "and, although a good deal of a sceptic, and inclined to follow Huxley, I can't bring myself to conceive of life without organism. Such theorizing is, to my mind, on a par with the illogical search for the philosopher's stone and a perpetual motor."

The old man's eyes sparkled as he turned full upon Roland.

"You dismiss the subject very airily, my young friend," he cried; "but let me tell you that I—I, whom you see here—have grappled with such problems through a weary century, and have conquered one of them."

"And that one is ——"

"The one that conquered Plattner!"

"Do I understand you to claim that you have discovered the life-principle?"

"Yes."

"Will you permit an utter stranger to inquire what is its nature?"

"Certainly. It is two-fold. The ultimate principle of life is carbon; the cause of its combination with water, or rather, with the two gaseous elements of water, and the development of organized existence therefrom, is electricity."

Ronald Wyde shrugged his broad shoulders a little, and absently replied:

"All I can say, mein Herr, is, that you've got the bulge on me."

"I beg your pardon——"

"Excuse me; I unconsciously translated an Americanism. I mean that I don't quite understand you."

"Which means that you do not believe me. It is but natural at your age, when one doubts as if by instinct. Would you be convinced?"

"Nothing would please me better."

With the same painful effort as before, the old man straightened himself, and made a piercing, clairvoyant examination into and through Ronald Wyde's eyes, as if reading the brain beyond them.

"I think I can trust you," he mumbled at last "Come with me."

Leaning on the young girl's arm, the old philosopher faltered through the cemetery and into the town, followed by Wyde, his hands again pocketed for safety. Groups of released church goers, sermon-fed, met them, and once in a while some stout burgher would nod patronisingly to Ronald's guides, and get in response a shaky, sidelong roll of the old man's head, as if it were mounted on a weak spiral spring. Farther on they intersected a knot of students, who eyed them askance and exchanged remarks in an undertone.

Keeping on deeper into the foul heart of the town, they passed through swarms of idle children playing sportlessly, as poverty is apt to play, in the dark shadows of the narrow street. They seemed incited to mirth and ribaldry by the sight of Ronald's new friend, and one even ventured to hurl a clod at him; but this striking Ronald instead, and he facing promptly to the hostile quarter whence it came, caused a sudden slinking of the crowd into unknown holes, like a horde of rats, and the street was for a time empty save for the little party that threaded it. Ronald began to think that the old man's sanity was gravely called in doubt by the townsfolk, and would really have backed out of his adventure but for the curiosity that had now got the upper hand of him.

Presently the old man sidled into a dingy doorway, like a tired beast run to earth, and Ronald followed him, not without a wish that the architect had provided for a more efficient lighting of the sombre passage-way in which he found himself. A sharp turn to the right, after a dozen groping paces, a narrow stairway, a bump or two against unexpected saliences of rough-mortared wall, two steps upward, and one very surprising step downward through a cavernous doorway that took away Ronald's breath for a moment, and sent it back again with a hot, creeping wave of sudden perspiration all over him, as is the way with missteps, and two more sharp turns, brought the three into a black, no-thorough-fare of a hall, whose farther end was closed by a locked door. The girl here rubbed a brimstone abomination of a match into a malodorous green glow, and by its help the old man got a tortuous key into the snakey opening in the great lock, creakily shot back its bolt, swung open the door, and motioned Ronald to enter.

He found himself in a long rather narrow room, with a high ceiling, duskily lighted by three wide windows that were thickly webbed and dusted, like ancestral bottles of fine crusty port. A veritable den it was, filled with what seemed to be the wrecks of philosophical apparatus dating back two or three generations—ill-fated ventures on the treacherous main of science. Here a fat-bellied alembic lolled lazily over in a gleamy sand bath, like a beach-lost galleon at ebb-tide; and there a heap of broken porcelain-tubing and shreds of crucibles lay, like bleaching ship ribs on a sullen shore. Beyond, by the middle window, stood a furnace, fireless, and clogged with grey ashes. Two or three solid, old-time tables, buil when joiners were more lavish of oaken timber than nowadays, stood hopelessly littered with retorts, filtering funnels, lamps, ring-stands, and squat beakers of delicate glass, caked with long-dried sediment, all alike dust-smirched. Ronald involuntarily sought for some huge Chaldaic tome,

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conveniently open at a favourite spell, or a handy crocodile or two dangling from the square beams overhead, but saw nothing more formidable than a stray volume of "Kant's Critique of Pure Reason." Taking this up, and glancing at its fly-leaf, he saw a name written in spidery German script, almost illegible from its shakiness—"Max Lebensfunke."

"Your name?" he asked.

"Yes, mein Herr," answered the old man, taking the volume and caressing it like a live thing in his fumbling hands. "This book was given to me by the great Kant himself," he added.

Reverently replacing it, he advanced a few steps toward the middle of the room. Ronald followed, and, turning from the windows, looked further around him. In striking contrast to the undisturbed disorder, so redolent of middle-age alchemy, was the big table that flanked the laboratory through its whole length. It began with a powerful galvanic battery, succeeded by a wiry labyrinth of coils and helices, with little keys in front of them like a telegraph-office retired from business; these gave place to many-necked jars wired together by twos and threes, like oath-bound patriots plotting treason; beyond them stood a great glass globe, connected with a sizable air-pump, and filled with a complexity of shiny wires and glassware; next loomed up a huge induction-magnet, carefully insulated on solid glass supports; and at the further extremity of the table lay a corpse.

Ronald Wyde, in spite of his many-sided experience of dissection-rooms, and morgues, and other ghastlinesses to which he had long since accustomed himself from principle, drew back at the sight—perhaps because he had come to this strange place to clutch the world-old mystery of the life-essence, and found himself, instead, confronted on its threshold by the equal mystery of death.

Herr Lebensfunke smiled feebly at this movement.

"A subject received this morning from Berlin," he said, in answer to Wyde's look of inquiry; "a sad piece of extravagance, mein Herr—a luxury to which I can rarely afford to treat myself."

Ronald Wyde bent over the body and looked into its face—a rough, red face, that had seemingly seen forty years of low-lived dissipation. The blotched skin and bleary eyes told of debauchery and drunkenness, and a slight alcoholic-fœtidness was perceptible, as from the breath of one who sleeps away the effects of a carouse.

"I hope you don't think of restoring this soaked specimen to life?" said Ronald.

"That is still beyond me," answered the old man, mournfully; "as yet I have not created life of a higher grade than of the lowest zoöphytes."

"Do you claim to have done as much as that?"

"It is not an idle claim," said Herr Lebensfunke, solemnly; "look at this, if you doubt."

"This" was the great crystal globe that rose from the middle of the long table, and dominated its lesser accessories, as some great dome swells above the clustered houses of a town. Tubes passing through its walls met in a smaller central globe half filled with a colourless liquid. Beneath this, and half encircling it, was an intricate maze of bright wire; and two other wires dipped into it, touching the surface of the liquid with their platinum tips. Within the liquid pulsed a shapeless mass of almost transparent spongy tissue.

"You see an aggregation of cells possessed of life—of a low order, it is true, but none the less life," said the philosopher proudly. "These were created from water chemically pure, with the exception of a trace of ammonia, and impregnated with liquid carbon, by the combined action of heat and induced electricity, in vacuo. Look!"

He pressed one of the keys before him. Presently the wire began to glow with a faint light which increased in intensity till the coal flamed into pure whiteness. Removing his finger the current ceased to flow, and the wire grew rapidly cool.

"I passed the whole strength of sixty cups through it to show you its action. Ordinarily, with one or two carbon shells, and refining the current by triple deduction, the temperature is barely blood-warm."

"Pardon an interruption," said Ronald. "You spoke of liquid carbon; does it exist?"

"Yes; here is some in this vial. See it—how pure, how transparent! How it loves and hoards the light!"

The old man held the vial up as he spoke, and turned it round and round.

"See how it flashes! No wonder, for it is the diamond, liquid and uncrystallized. Think how these fools of men have called diamonds precious above all gems through these many weary years, and showered them on their kings or tossed them to their mistresses' feet, never dreaming that the silly stone they lauded was inert, crystallized life!"

"Can't you crystallize diamonds yourself?" asked Wyde, "and make Freiberg a Golconda and yourself a Crœsus?"

"It could be done after the lapse of thousands of years," replied Herr Lebensfunke. "Place undiluted liquid carbon in that inner globe; keep the coil at a white heat, and if Adam had started the process, his heir-at-law would have a Koh-i-noor to-day, and a nice lawsuit for its possession."

Ronald Wyde bent toward the globe once more, and examined the throbbing mass closely, whistling softly meanwhile.

"If you can create this cellular life, why not develop it still higher into an organism?"

"Because I can only create life—not soul. Years ago I was a free-thinker; now my discoveries have made me a deist—for I found that my cells, living as they were, and possessing undoubted parietal circulation, were not germs; and though they might cluster into a bulk like this, as bubbles do to form froth, to evolve an animal or plant from them was far beyond me—that needs what we call soul. But, in searching blindly for this higher power, I grasped a greater discovery than any I had hoped for—the power to isolate life from its bodily organism."

"You have to keep the bottle carefully corked, I should imagine," laughed Ronald.

"Not quite," said Herr Lubensfunke, joining in the laugh; "life is not glue. My grand discovery is the life-magnet."

"Which has the post of honour on your table here, has it not?" inquired Ronald, drawing his hand from his pocket and pointing to the insulated coil.

The old man glanced keenly at his hand as he did so; at which Ronald seemed confused, and pocketed it again abruptly.

"Yes, that is the life-magnet. You see this bent glass tube surrounded by the helix? That tube contains liquid carbon. I pass through the helix a current of

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induced electricity, generated by the action of these sixty Bunsen cups upon a succession of coils and carbon cores, and the magnet becomes charged with soulless life. I reverse the stream—what was positive now is negative, and the same magnet will absorb life from a living being to an extent only to be measured by thousands of millions."

"Then what effect is produced on the body you pump the life from?"

"Death."

"And what becomes of the soul?"

"I don't quite know. I fancy, however, that the magnet absorbs that too."

"Can it give it back?"

"Certainly; otherwise my life-magnet would belie its name, and be simply an ingenious and expensive instrument of death. By reversing the condition, I can restore both soul and life to the body from which I drew them, or to another body, even after the lapse of several days."

"Have you ever done so?"

"I have."

Ronald looked reflectively downward to his boot-toe, but seemed to find nothing there—except boot-toe.

"I say, my friend," he spoke at last, "haven't you got a pin you can stick in me? I'd like to know if I'm dreaming."

"I can convince you better than by pins," replied Herr Lebensfunke. "Let me see that hand you hide so carefully."

Ronald Wyde slowly drew it from his pocket, as reluctantly as though it were a grudged charity dole, and extended it to the old man. Its little finger was gone.

"A defect that I am foolishly sensitive about," said he. "A childish freak—playing with edged tools, you know. A boy-playmate chopped it off by accident; I cut his head open with his own hatchet, and made an idiot of him for life—that's all."

"I could do this," said Herr Lebensfunke, pausing on each word as if it were somewhat heavy, and had to be lifted out of his cramped chest by force; "I could draw your entity into that magnet, leaving you side by side with this corpse. I could dissect a finger from that same corpse, attach it to your own dead hand by a little of that palpitating life mass you have seen, pass an electric stream through it, and a junction would be effected in three or four days. I could then restore you to existence whole, and not maimed as now."

"I don't like the idea of dying, even for a day," answered Wyde. "Couldn't you contrive to lend me a body while you are mending my own?"

"You can take that one, if you like."

Ronald Wyde looked round once more at the sodden features of the corpse, and smiled lugubriously.

"A mighty shabby old customer," he said, "and I doubt if I could feel at home in his skin; but I'm willing to risk it for the sake of the novelty of the thing."

The old philosopher's thin face lit up with pleasure.

"You consent, then?" he chuckled in his womanish treble.

"Of course I do. Begin at once, and have done with it."

"Not now, mein Herr; some modifications must be made in the connections—mere matters of detail. Come again to-night."

"At what hour?"

"At ten. Mein Vögelein, show the Herr the way out."

The girl, who had been moving restlessly about the room all this time, with her wild brown eyes fixed now on Ronald, now on the old man, and oftener, in a shy, inquisitive stare, on the corpse, lit a dusty chemical lamp, and led the way down the awkward passage and stairs.

Ronald tried to start a conversation with her as he followed.

"You are too young, my birdling, to be accustomed to such sights as this up-stairs."

"Birdling is not too young, she's almost fourteen," said the girl, proudly. "And she likes it, too; it makes her think of mother. Mother went to sleep on that table, mein Herr."

"Poor thing! she's half-witted," thought Wyde, as he passed into the street. "By-by, birdie."

Home he walked, briskly, to be met under his flaming balcony by Lottchen's kindly afternoon greeting. How had mein Herr passed his sabbath? she asked.

"Quietly enough, Lottchen. I met a an old philosopher on the God's-Acre, and went home with him to his shop. Have you ever heard of Herr Doctor Lebensfunke?"

"Yes, mein Herr. Wrong here, they say," and she tapped her wide, round German forehead, and lifted her eyes expressively heavenward.

"Sold himself to the devil, eh?" asked Wyde.

Lottchen was not quite sure on that point. Some said one thing and some another. There was undoubtedly a devil, else how could good Doctor Luther have thrown his inkstand at him? But he had never been seen in Doctor Lebensfunke's neighbourhood; and, on the whole, Lottchen was inclined to attribute the Herr Doctor's trouble to an indefinable something whose nature was broadly hinted at by more tapping of the forehead.

Ronald Wyde mounted the stairs, locked himself in his room, and wished himself out of the scrape he was getting into. But, being in for it now, he lit a cigar, and tried to fancy the processes he would have to go through, and how he, a natty and respectable young fellow, would look and feel in a drunkard's skin. His conjectures being too foggily outlined to please him, he put them aside, and waited impatiently enough for ten o'clock. A moonlight walk through the low streets, transfigured by the silver gleam into fairy vistas—all but the odour—brought him to Herr Lebensfunke's house. Simple birdling, on the lookout for him, piloted him through the unsafe channel and brought him to anchor in the dimly lit room.

"All is ready," said the philosopher, as he trembled forward and shook Ronald's hand. "See here." Zig-zags of silk-bound wire squirmed hither and thither from the life magnet. Two of them ended in carbon points. "And here, too, my young friend, is your new finger."

It lay detached in the central globe, and on its severed end atoms of protoplasm were already clustered. "Literally a second-hand article," thought Ronald; but, not venturing to translate the idiom, he only bowed and said: "Ach so!" which means anything and everything in German.

It was not without a very natural sinking of the heart that Ronald Wyde divested himself of his clothing, and took his position, by the old man's direction, on the stout table, side by side with the dead. A flat brass

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The old man and the corpse of his former self lay together under the light of a lamp.

plate pressed between his shoulders, and one of the carbon points, clamped in a little insulated stand, rested on his bosom and quivered with the quickened motion of the heart beneath it. The other point touched the dead man's breast.

"Are you ready?"

"Yes."

The old man pressed a key, and as he did so a sharp sting, hardly worse than a leech's bite, pricked Roland Wyde's breast. A sense of languor crept slowly upon him, his feet tingled, his breath came slowly, and waves of light and shade pulsed in indistinct alternation before his sight; but through them the old man's eyes peered into his, like a dream. Presently Ronald would have started if he could, for two old philosophers were craning over him instead of one. But as he looked more steadily, one face softly dimmed into nothing, and the other grew brighter and stronger in its lines, while the room flushed with an unaccountable light. The little key clicked once more; a vague sensation that the current had somehow ceased to flow, roused him, and he raised himself on his elbow and looked in blank bewilderment at his own dead self lying by his side in the daylight, while the sunrise tried to peer through the webbed panes.

"Is it over," he asked, with a puzzled glance around him; and added, "Which am I?"

"Either, or both," answered Herr Lebensfunke. "Your identity will be something of a problem to you for a day or two."

Aided by the old man, Ronald awkwardly got into the sleazey clothes that went with the exchange—growing less and less at home each minute. He felt weak and sore; his head ached, and the wound left by the fresh amputation of his little finger, throbbed angrily.

"I suppose I may as well go now," he said. "When can I get my old self there back again?"

"On Thursday night, if all works well," said the old man. "Till then, good-day."

Ronald Wyde's first impulse, as he shambled into the open air, was to go home; but he thought of the confusion his sadly mixed identity would cause in Frau Spritzkrapfen's quiet household, and came to a dead-stop to consider the matter. Then he decided to quit the town for the interminable four days—to go to Dresden, or anywhere. His next step was to slouch into the nearest beer-cellar and call for beer, pen, and paper.

While waiting for these, he surveyed his own reflection

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in the dingy glass that hung above the table he sat by —a glass that gave his face a wavy look, as if seen through heated air. He felt an amused pride in his altered appearance, much as a masquerader might be pleased with a clever disguise, and caught himself wondering whether he were likely to be recognised in it. Apparently satisfied of his safety from detection, he turned to the table and wrote a beer-scented note to Frau Spritzkrapfen, explaining his sudden absence by some discreet fiction. He got along well enough until he reached the end, when, instead of his own flowing sign-manual, he tipsily scrawled the unfamiliar name of Hans Kraut. Tearing the sheet angrily across, he wrote another, and signed his name with an effort. He was about to seek a messenger to carry his note, when it occurred to him to leave it himself, which he did; and had thereby the keen satisfaction of hearing pretty Lottchen confess, with a blush on her fair German cheek, that they would all miss Herr Wyde very much, because they all loved him. Turning away with a sigh that was very like a hiccough, he trudged to the railway station and took a ticket to Dresden, going third-class as best befitting his clothes and appearance.

He felt ashamed enough of himself as the train rumbled over the rolling land between Freiberg and the capital, and gave him time to think connectedly over what had happened, and what he now was. His fellow-passengers cast him sidelong looks, and gave him a wide berth. Even the quaint, flat-arched windows of one pane each, that winked out of the red-tiled roofs like sleepy eyes, seemed to leer drunkenly at him as they scudded by.

Ronald Wyde's account of those days in Dresden was vague and misty. He crept along the bustling streets of that sombre, grey city, that seemed to look more natural by cloud-light than in the full sunshine, feeling continually within him a struggle between two incompatible natures now so strangely blended. Each day he kept up the contest manfully, passing by the countless beer-cellars and drinking-booths with an assumption of firmness and resolution that oozed slowly away toward nightfall, when the animal body of the late Hans Kraut would contrive to get the better of the animating principle of Ronald Wyde; the refined nature would yield to the toper's brute-craving, with an awful sense of its deep degradation in so succumbing, and, before midnight, Hans was gloriously drunk, to Ronald's intense grief.

Time passed somehow. He had memories of sunny lounges on the Bruhl'sche Terrace, looking on the turbid flow of the eddied Elbe, and watching the little steamboats that buzzed up and down the city's flanks, settling now and then, like gad-flies, to drain it of a few drops of its human life. Well-known friends, whose hands he had grasped not a week before, passed him unheedingly; all save one, who eyed him for a moment, said "Poor devil!" in an undertone, and dropped a silber-gro' into his maimed hand.

He felt glad of even this lame sympathy in his lowness; but most of all he prized the moistened glance of pity that flashed upon him from the great dark eyes of a lovely girl who had passed him now and then as he slouched along. Once, a being as degraded and scurvy as his own outward self, turned to him, called him "Dutzbruder," asked him how he left them all in Berlin, stared at Ronald's blank look of non-recognition, and passed on with a muttered curse on his own stupidity in mistaking a stranger, in broad daylight, for his crony, Kraut.

Another memory was of the strange lassitude that seemed to almost paralyze him after even moderate exertion, and caused him to drop exhausted on a bench on the terrace when he had shuffled over less than half its length. More than once the suspicion crept upon him that only a portion of his vitality now remained to him, and that its greater part lay mysteriously coiled in Herr Lebensfunke's life-magnet. And this, in turn, broadened into a doubting distrust of the Herr himself —a dread lest the old man might in some way appropriate his stock of life to his own use, and so renew his fast-expiring lease for a score or two of years to come. At last this dread grew so painfully definite, that he hurried back to Freiberg a day before his appointed time, and once more found his two-fold self wandering through its devious streets.

It was long after dark, and a thin rain slanted on the slippery stones, as he again made his way through the deserted and sleepy paths of the town to the old philosopher's house. He was wet, chilled, weary, and sick enough at heart as he leaned against the old stone doorway and waited for an answer to his knock. The plash of the heavier rain-drops from the tiled leaves was the only sound he heard for many minutes, until, at last, pattering feet neared him on the inside, and a child's voice asked him who was there. To his friendly response the door was opened half wide, and Vögelein's blank, pretty face peeped in.

Was Herr Lebensfunke at home? No; he had said that he wasn't at home; but then, she thought he was in the long room where mamma went to sleep. Could he be seen? No, she thought not; he was very tired, and, in her own—Vögelein's—opinion, he was going to sleep, too, just as mamma did. And the wizened little face, with its eldritch eyes and tangled hair, was withdrawn, and the door began to close. Ronald forced himself inside, and grasped the child's arm.

"Vögelein, don't you know me?"

The girl, in nowise startled, gravely set her flickering candle on the doorstep, looked up at him wonderingly, as if he were an exhibition, and said she thought not, unless he had been asleep on the table.

"Good heavens!" cried Ronald, "can this child talk of nothing else but people asleep on a table?"

But, as he spoke, a thought whirred through his brain. He drew the poor half-witted thing close to him and asked:

"Can Vögelein tell me something about mamma, and how she went to sleep?"

The child rambled on, pleased to find a listener to her foolish prattle. All he could connect into a narrative was, that the girl's mother, some seven or eight years before, had been drained of her life by the awful magnet, and that, as the child said, "the Herr Doctor ever since had talked just like mamma."

His dread was well founded, then. The old man's one dream and end was to prolong his wretched life; could he doubt that he would not now make use of the means he had so unwisely thrown in his way? He turned about, half maddened.

"Girl!" he cried, "I must see the old man! Where is here?"

He couldn't see him, she whined. He was asleep up there on the table. At one o'clock he had said he would wake up.

Pass "Short Stories" on to a friend.

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He pushed past her, mounted to the long room, pressed open the unfastened door, and entered.

The old man and the corpse of his former self lay together under the light of a lamp that swung from the beam overhead.

An isolated carbon point was directed to each white, still breast. From the old man's hand a cord ran to a key beyond, arranged to make or break connection at a touch. By it stood a clock, with a simple mechanism attached that bore upon a second key like the first, evidently planned to press upon it when the hands should mark a given hour. The child had said that he would wake at one, and it was now past midnight.

Ronald Wyde comprehended it all now. The wily old man's feeble life had been withdrawn into the great magnet, and mixed therein with what remained of his own. In less than an hour the key would fall, and the double stream would flow into and animate his young body, which would then wake to renewed life; while the cast-off shell beside it, worn to utter uselessness by a toilsome century, would be left to molder as a mothed garment.

Surely no time was to be lost; his life depended upon instant action. And yet, comprehending this, he went to work slowly, and as a somnambulist might, acting almost by instinct, and well knowing that a blunder now meant irrevocable death.

Carefully disengaging the cord from the old man's yet warm grasp, and setting the carbon point aside, he lifted the shrivelled corpse and bore it away, to cast it on the white rubbish-heap in one corner. Returning to his work, he stripped himself, and lay down in the old man's place. As he did so the distant minster bells rang the three-quarters.

Was there yet time?

He braced his shoulders firmly against the brass plate under him, and moved the carbon point steadily back to its place, with its tip resting on his breast—the silk wrapped wire that dangled between it and the magnet quivering as he did so, as with conscious life. Drawing a long breath, he tightened the cord, and heard a faint click as the key snapped down.

The same sharp sting as before instantly pricked his breast, tingling thrills pulsed over him, beats of light and shadow swept before his eyes, and he lost all consciousness. For how long he knew not At last he felt, rather than saw, the lamp-rays flickering above him, and opened his eyes as though waking from a tired sleep. Sitting up, he gave a fearful look around him, as if dreading what he might see. The drunkard's body lay stretched and motionless beside him, and the clock marked three. He was saved!

Slipping down from his perilous bed, he resumed the old familiar garments that belonged to him as Ronald Wyde, shuddering with emotion as he did so. Only pausing to give one look at the heap in the shadowy corner, and at the other sleeper under the now dying lamp, he quitted the room, and locked its heavy door upon the two silent guardians of its life-secrets. When he reached the street, he found the rain had ceased to trop, and that the cold stars blinked over the slumberous down. Before noon he had taken leave of Frau Spritzkrapfen, turned buxom Lottchen scarlet all over by a hearty, sudden, farewell kiss, and was far on his way from Freiberg, with its re-vined balcony and its dark laboratory, never again to visit it or them. And as the busy engine toiled and shrieked, and with each beat of its mighty steam-heart carried him further away, his thoughts flew back and clustered around the witless, brown-eyed birdling. Poor child, he never learned her fate.

* * * * *

I heard this strange story from its hero one sunny summer morning, as we swept over the meadowy reaches of the Erie Zailway or hung along the cliff side by the wooded windings of the Susquehanna. When he had ended it, he smiled languidly, and, showing me his still mutilated hand, said that the old doctor's job had been a sad bungle, after all. In fact, the only physical proof that remained to verify his story was a curved blue spot where the ingoing current of the magnet had carried particles from the carbon point and lodged them beneath the skin. Psychologically, he was sadly mixed up, he said; for since that time he had felt that four lives were joined in him—his own, the remnant of Herr Lebensfunke's miserable hoard merged in that of poor birdling's mother, and, last of all Hans Kraut's.

He left the cars soon afterwards at Binghampton, watchfully followed by a stout, shabby man with a three days' beard stubbling his chin, who had occupied the seat in front of us, and had turned now and then to listen for a moment to Ronald's rapid narration.

A week later I heard that he was dead—having committed suicide in a fit of delirium soon after his admission to the Binghampton Inebriate Asylum. The attendant who made him ready for burial noticed a singular blue mark on his left breast that looked, he said a little like a horseshoe magnet.

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A Nine Days' Wonder.

THE whole street—the whole neighbourhood was in a ferment. For that matter, all London, from East to West, quivered with excitement and curious imaginings, for the Press had circulated far and wide the fact that Andrew Atterbury, of No. 2 Delaval Street, W., had suddenly and mysteriously disappeared.

Everyone was ready, of course, with the usual theory as to why and where the missing man had gone; but also, as usual, the suggestions were worse than valueless. As for the police, they were completely at fault and—awaiting information.

The strangest part, however, of the whole affair was that the only individual who might be said to have any, the greatest in fact, personal interest in Mr. Atterbury's movements manifested a singular and irritating mysterious unconcern.

At eleven o'clock on the morning of the day when the newspapers were devoting columns of "copy" to the "Sensational Case of Mr. Andrew Atterbury," the wife of that well-known financier and accredited agent in London for the South American Republic of "Buenos Vistas," emerged, groomed to perfection, from her front door and stood a moment calmly and deliberately buttoning her gloves, the while she talked to and teased her fat, wheezy, black pug.

The whisperings, the astonished hand-liftings, and the general surmisings, charitable and otherwise (principally otherwise) that followed the lady in her passage along the sunny side of the street testified undoubtedly to the extraordinary feeling of respectable surprise evoked by an attitude the ordinary mind could not grasp, much less understand.

Andrew Atterbury was an exceptionally clever man. City men swore by him, and followed his lead in things financial with the blind faith of sheep in the bell-wether. Not a movement in monetary matters, either in London or the world over, took place without his knowledge or intervention; not a "golden pie" was mixed without his finger, or hand even, being deep in it.

He was the "King of the Money Market," and although not a member of the Stock Exchange, knew more of its inner working, and controlled its more important interests to a greater extent than the most magnificent broker of them all.

The Republic he commercially—and rumour said politically—represented was certainly fortunate in its agent, for when its sister States failed, as they often did, to touch the pocket side of the well-to-do outside world, Buenos Vistas could always rely upon its loans being successfully taken up and placed without vexatious or unnecessary trouble or delay.

The financier's nationality was a mystery. Some said he was a Jew, and assuredly there was warrant for the opinion. He had all the Israelitish faculty for acquiring wealth, his personality also being markedly Hebraic. But where he was born no man knew.

Speaking English fluently and with a perfect accent, possessing a peculiarly English name, it was difficult to deny him a Briton's birthright. Yet German, High Dutch, Russian even, were as familiar to him as his presumably mother tongue.

A reticent man, more than ordinarily so, it was hopeless to seek to "draw" him on these and other private matters, and so men were content to worship Mammon in his company and under his priestship, and to let the mere detail of his genius quietly rest until that inevitable social millennium when revelation should satisfactorily account for every, as yet, unaccountable thing.

It was an open secret that the affairs of Buenos Vistas occupied the first place with Andrew Atterbury, and the largest share by far of his time and attention. The papers would every now and again publish a paragraph stating that "the agent for the Republic of Buenos Vistas left London last night by the late mail *en route* for San Madura. Mr. Atterbury's mission is, we understand, not altogether unconnected with a certain new loan, rendered necessary, it is believed, by the present critical state of public affairs in the Republic."

Statements such as these were common, everyday incidents, so much so that people thought but little of them; but when without a word of warning, without any journalistic notice or send-off, Andrew Atterbury, between the hours of six p.m. on the 10th and nine a.m. on the 11th of August, disappeared completely, no man knowing the manner of his going, tongues were set a-wagging and the floodgates of public wonderment flung wide to their fullest.

He had been last seen when descending from his brougham at his own door at six o'clock on the evening of the 10th, but from the moment that the house door closed behind him no more was known of him. A very

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pretty mystery, deepened, as has been said, by his wife's apparently inexplicable indifference.

Bankruptcy, ruin, and the whole pack of commercial ban-dogs were trotted out, patted on the back, and otherwise made much of. It is such a satisfaction to hound the canine at the heels of a successful quarry. Much may be pardoned in our fellow man, but success —never.

Yet was this altogether a false scent, for Atterbury's solicitors—without, of course, revealing details—publicly announced in a letter to The Times that the financial position of their client was, if anything, still more impregnable and satisfactory than it had ever been, and that those who sought to insinuate ugly and scandalous suggestions did so without a shadow of foundation upon which to base their calumnious impertinencies.

Now there was in Atterbury's employ a person, one Barnaby Quicket, who probably could, if he would, have done much to satisfy public curiosity. But there existed a reason and a difficulty, the explaining away of the one and the surmounting of the other being alike almost out of the question.

Andrew Atterbury, big man financially though he was, had no office or other recognised place for the transaction of his business. He kept no books, in the ordinary sense of the word, nor had he in his service an army of clerks and underlings such as his brother magnates habitually indulged in.

One solitary henchman had he, the aforesaid Barnaby Quicket, and although there was a limit to his confidence in the man, yet the latter, being a trifle unscrupulous, did not hesitate to acquire information with regard to his master's more exclusive business arrangements by means undoubtedly underhanded, not to say criminal. The man had become an adept in the nefarious art of opening letters and deftly reclosing them, in keyhole spying, and in many other little ways and habits that come so easily to the crookedly-inclined.

Quicket's non-location in any one particular place rendered any questioning of him well nigh an impossibility. It had been always difficult to catch him; he was a sort of City "will-o'-the-wisp," evasive, disappointing; but now that his chief had melted into the shadow he was literally not to be found at all.

A certain stockbroker's clerk, to whom he was known by sight, declared distinctly that he had seen him, dressed for travelling, on the platform at Euston, evidently about to leave by the night mail. This in itself looked suspicious, but before the clue could be followed up and run to earth the opportunity had passed, and Barnaby Quicket, too, had dropped into the abyss of the unseen.

At last everybody decided to give up the riddle in despair, in the course of a fortnight the affair being practically forgotten save for an occasional reference to it in the daily papers.

To this day people talk of the ball given by Mrs. Atterbury in Delaval Street, just three months after the disappearance of her husband. There were no refusals. People were only too eager to attend in the hope of seeing or hearing something sensational. All such cravings were, however, unsatisfied.

The hostess was graciousness itself, beautifully dressed, but—absolutely silent upon the one all-important topic. There was no appearance of self-consciousness in Mrs. Atterbury's manner, no sign of any attempt to disguise real feelings. Perfectly natural, she moved among her guests with a dignity that to most of them seemed new and unaccustomed.

I have it on the authority of a well-known Society leador that Mrs. Atterbury trod her drawing-room floor that night with the step of a queen, that robes, crown, and all the other paraphernalia of royalty were alone needed to make a picture unequalled in the gallery of sovereigns. I learned also from my same informant a fact which, if it were true—and I have no reason for believing it to be otherwise—furnished the one link lacking to complete the chain of, as yet, circumstantial evidence.

Lady Hatfield averred that while resting in Mrs. Atterbury's boudoir, no one else being in the apartment, she heard voices, one of them that of her hostess, in conversation behind the closed door communicating with the adjoining sitting-room. She declares that she heard Mrs. Atterbury say:

"Well, Quicket, this is my last word to His Excellency, namely, that I will be with him upon the 6th of January. And, now, you must not delay longer or you will miss the mail."

Lady Hatfield says that after an interval of scarcely two minutes she saw a man, attired in a long ulster and wearing a travelling cap, pass the door of the boudoir and disappear quickly down the staircase.

The next day a large board announcing that No. 2 was to let appeared on the front of the house, other indications making it clear, a fact verified later in the day, that Mrs. Atterbury had departed for parts unknown.

* * * * *

"Revolution in Buenos Vistas. Complete Anarchy in San Madura, the Capital. Assassination of General Santhos, the President of the Republic, and Assumption by Señor Artuero of the Presidential Authority."

The above was the leaded headline announcement in all the evening papers of the 17th of January. Strange things began to be whispered at street corners in the City anent the matter. The name of the sometime financier, Atterbury, was banded about, and became somehow mixed up with those who had brought about the state of things existing in Buenos Vistas.

Then a letter appeared in The Times from an English resident in San Madura, making definite assertion that from his own personal knowledge of the missing Andrew Atterbury, he was able to declare that Señor Artuero, the revolutionary trader, the organiser of the *pronunciamento*, and the late London agent of the Republic were one and the same person.

This was in itself startling, but when a cable communicating the proclamation of that person as President was published in every newspaper throughout the three kingdoms the surprise was intensified a hundredfold.

* * * * *

His Excellency Señor Andrea Artuero, President of the Republic of Buenos Vistas, and his beautiful consort never returned to England; for when, less than six months after his accession, Señor Artuero, otherwise Atterbury, was shot during one of the perennial popular outbreaks in the capital, his wife, the sole inheritor of his vast wealth, departed for Paris, in which city she is likely to end her days in that fashion most pleasing to herself, and as Nature evidently intended her.

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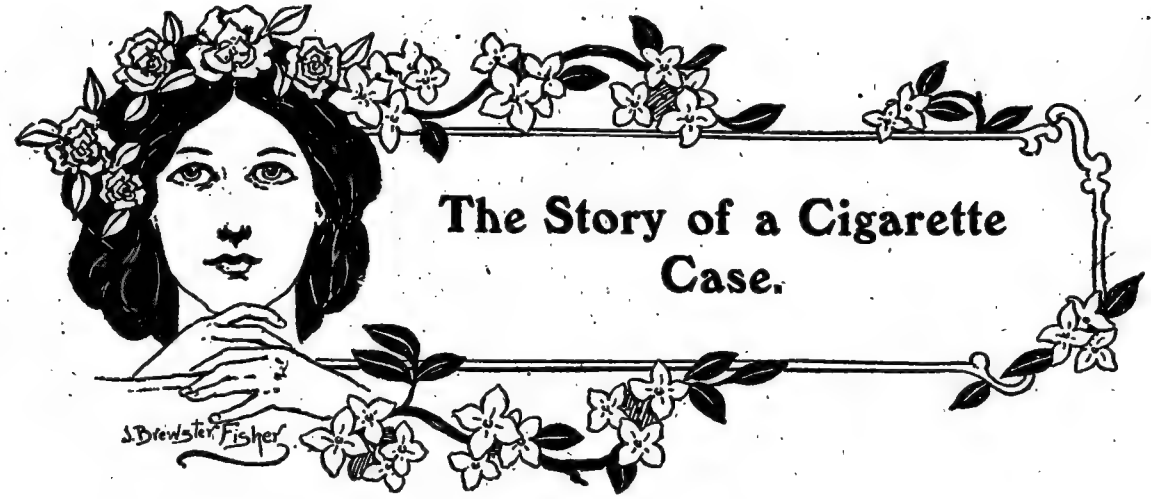

The Story of a Cigarette Case.

LIFE in what is called Society (remarked the ex-valet) is not all beer and skittles, nor even champagne and billiards, as I found out when I was "own man" to young Lord Ernest Delhoste, the second son of the Earl of Sinbars. He was a nice young chap, and very popular with his intimates. Life offers many temptations to young men when they are handsome, popular, and sufficiently well-off; and I am afraid my master rather went the pace till that happened which often happens—he met and fell in love with a sweet young girl of his own rank in life. There was her photograph in a big silver frame on Lord Ernest's mantelpiece, and I often used to have a good look at it, for a sweeter, purer, truer face I have never seen.

You know the kind of face which gives you at once the impression of a loyal and straightforward nature. Miss Mollie Trevarthen's was one of that kind. She belonged to a Cornish family, as the name will tell you—one of the very oldest in the kingdom, so I have heard, and so old and proud that three successive heads had refused titles at the hands of the sovereign of their day.

My master was not the same man after his engagement to his sweetheart got its due six lines in "London Day by Day" in the *Daily Telegraph*. The dubious companions who ate his lunches, drank his wine, smoked his cigars, "borrowed" his money, and swindled him at cards and billiards, were disgusted at the change. They would indignantly demand of me the reason of Lord Ernest's cutting himself off from his old haunts and habits in this sudden fashion; but, of course, being up in my business, I joined the "Know Nothing Club" directly. People in my position do not believe in the policy of the open mouth, and I do not blame them.

I am not saying that my master became an entire hermit after his acceptance by Miss Trevarthen. Among other things he still gave little card-parties in his rooms, though the company was a little more select than it had been, and only men in his own rank of life were admitted. One of the guests was invariably a Mr. Frank Hill. I believe he had been in the army, but had resigned on succeeding to some estates and a large fortune.

He was a bachelor, and currently reported to be sweet on Miss Trevarthen, though it did not appear to make any difference in his attitude towards my master, who on his part, never dreamed that any such attachment existed. Mr. Hill was a short, stocky man, very broad across the shoulders, with a very firm jaw, which his habit of shaving clean emphasised.

I should think he would have been a very useful man in a fight. Some people thought him good-looking, but in my opinion his eyes spoilt him, being hard and cruel in the extreme. However, his pleasant, but reserved, manner offended nobody, and "Old Frank Hill" was generally popular, though he did not draw to himself that admiring affection which seemed the birthright of Lord Ernest.

Never shall I forget a certain April night about six weeks after the engagement was announced. My master was having a little game of poker in his rooms. Though he hardly touched a card himself at that time, his guests were all devotees of the fascinating pastime, and they were soon hard at it in the midst of that absorbed silence which all good card-players love.

Suddenly one of the players, a callow youth named Deecie (who was subsequently slain at Spion Kop, poor lad!) picked up a massive silver cigarette-case which lay at Hill's elbow.

"F. H. from M. T.," he read out; and being a child utterly without discretion, he simpered: "Who may 'M. T.' be, if it isn't a rude question?"

"It is a rude question," snapped Hill, curtly.

Poor Deecie went scarlet, and dropped the cigarette case as if it were hot. But Hill wasn't looking at him; he stared straight at Lord Ernest with such mingled hate and triumph in his cold eyes, that as I caught it over my master's shoulder, I nearly let go the glass I was handing him.

For a moment Lord Ernest looked back at him, white to the lips, then in an ordinary tone, he said:

"I see your ten, and ten better."

So the game went on.

Pass "Short Stories" on to a friend.

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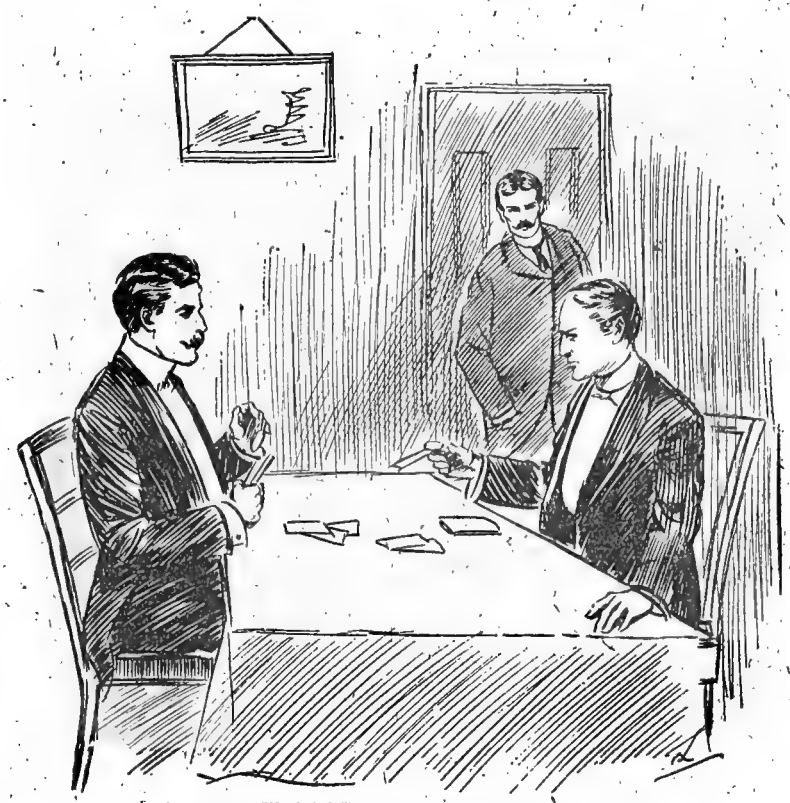
Mr. Hill was the last to leave the chambers when the party broke up. The wan dawn was breaking in through the window, and the sparrows were chattering. Most of the gentlemen looked heavy-eyed and haggard.

"I want a word with you, Hill," said Lord Ernest, when the two were alone.

"Yes?" said Mr. Hill in a non-committal manner.

"You made an insinuation at the table about—about the initials on your cigarette-case," said my master in a low, hoarse voice.

"I? An insinuation? I said nothing, my dear chap," cried Mr. Hill, raising his thick eyebrows in wonderment.



There were the two men quietly playing cards with as much composure as if the violent scene had never taken place.

"You looked an insinuation."

"Rot! I can't stand here at this hour in the morning arguing about looks. I want to get to bed."

He moved towards the door.

"One moment," said Lord Ernest in the same low tone, "I don't want to pry into your affairs."

"That's lucky," put in Mr. Hill with a black sneer.

"But I must know that it is not from Miss Trevarthen," said Lord Ernest, bringing out the last words with an expression of such utter misery that one's heart bled for him.

"Upon my word!" cried Mr. Hill scornfully. "Is that the kind of insinuation you make against the lady you are engaged to? You, to talk about insinuations!" He gave a low, contemptuous laugh.

My lord saw the trap into which his subtle enemy had lured him. He was livid with shame, anger, and disgust with himself. So engrossed were the two disputants in their conversation that neither of them had noticed me, as I busied myself with some totally unnecessary task at a side-table, but just then my lord happened to see me, and I was promptly ordered off to bed. I did not go to bed. I thought perhaps my lord might want me again before he retired, so I sat up in my own room. I could hear nothing from the room I had left but an agitated voice which I recognised as Lord Ernest's, and occasionally the cold, sneering tones of the other. All of a sudden, a loud cry in my master's voice was succeeded by a deadly stillness.

The silence continued for so long that I entered the room in case I might be wanted; but I nearly cried out with astonishment at what I saw. There were the two men quietly playing cards, with as much composure as if the violent scene of ten minutes before had never taken place. Soon, however, I noticed that with all my master's apparent composure, one large bead of moisture had appeared on his forehead, and his face was pallid and drawn. Hill was coolly smoking, and his case lay beside him on the table. He dealt another hand. My master began to bet confidently, after he had drawn a couple of cards, for the game was poker. I may say that both players drew two cards. The betting went on in silence for some time, till only a few chips remained to my master.

"Another ten," said Hill, quietly, putting up the stakes.

"I see you," said my lord in a harsh whisper, and he pushed over the last pile of ivory discs that remained beneath his hand.

He had to pass his tongue over his dry lips before he could manage to mutter: "What have you got?"

"Four tens," cried Mr. Hill, flinging down his cards faces upwards. "Is that good enough?"

My master nodded.

"Quite good enough," he said in the same harsh whisper, and he idly fingered the cards that had fallen from his hand.

Mr. Hill rose.

I handed him his hat and coat.

"Good-night, Delhoste," he said, but my master was staring in front of him with such blank horror on his face as froze the blood in my veins.

* * * * *

I never want to pass such another month as the one following that night. I really thought my lord's mind

"The Golden Dwarf" is simply enthralling.

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had become affected. He was alternately wildly, recklessly merry, or in the depths of gloom. He spent money like water, and gambled furiously every night. Mr. Hill was never seen again at our place; nor, indeed, any of the people who had been present on the night of the quarrel. At the boisterous supper-parties which my lord gave, I shuddered to hear his wild laughter ringing high above the rest. It seemed to me as if the eternally-lost laughed.

I flung myself upon my lord, caught his wrist, and the pistol in his hand exploded.

Exactly a month from the date of his last game with Mr. Hill, my master handed me a note in the afternoon.

"There is a book—the title of it is inside—which I want you to get for me this afternoon," he said with the feverish, nervous manner that had become natural with him. "You must go to every bookseller's shop in London if necessary, but don't come back without it. It is most important that I have it to-day."

His room was in great disorder, and there was a heap of burnt paper in the grate. Two or three letters lay on his writing-table, and I noticed the top one was addressed to Miss Trevarthen.

"What are you waiting for?" cried Lord Ernest, irritably. "Why don't you go? A little fresh air will do you good, for I don't think you've been fifty yards from the door for the last month."

It was quite true that I had seldom been away from our place, for I felt that things were not going at all well, and I wished to be on hand in the case of an emergency.

Well, that afternoon I visited, as it seemed to me, dozens of booksellers' shops, but at each received the same reply. None of them had the book my master desired so particularly; and the assistant at the last place I visited bluntly said that he did not believe that there was such a book in existence.

Then, as it were, I saw clearly. Like a thunderbolt the revelation came upon me. My master had desired to get me out of the way for a time. But why? His extraordinary behaviour of late—the strange poker game I had witnessed — I began to piece things together rapidly. Then, chilling my blood, came the recollection of a wicked wager I had read about some years before, and had forgotten—that fearful institution known as the "American duel."

The duellists play cards, and the loser swears to kill himself at the end of a certain time. Could it be that my master was the victim of one of these fiendish contests? I leapt into a cab, and shouted to the man to hurry to Victoria Street on a matter of life and death.

As I expected, my master's door was locked when I reached home, but—thank Heaven!—I could hear his feverish tread still going to and fro. I put my shoulder against the door—I was young and strong then—it went in with a crash. I flung myself upon my lord, caught his wrist, the pistol in his hand exploded with a stunning report, but the bullet sped harmlessly upward. He fought as furiously for death as most for life — cursed and struck me, but I held on, and gradually he ceased to struggle, and only panted and glared wildly at me as I pinned him against the wall.

"My lord," I gasped at him, "listen, there is no need. I know everything. I tell you Mr. Hill cheated that night at poker."

"What do you mean?" he cried, wildly.

"I tell you he did," I said. "I saw him pass the cards over his cigarette-case as he dealt and he saw their reflection in the polished silver!"

* * * * * *

This is how I saved my master from an ignominious end. He is now the adoring husband of the sweet girl whose photograph used to stand on his mantelpiece, for needless to say the initials on Mr. Hill's cigarette-case were not those of Mollie Trevarthen, but of a very different "M. T."

Tell us of a better paper than "Short Stories" and we'll take it in.

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Eli Blake, Democrat.

"Well, they're my sentiments, anyway; an' I'd stick to 'em, if I died for it."

"What! you'll make master an' man change places?"

"I didn't mean that; all I say is, as the 'man' 'as 'is rights as well as the 'master,' an' that one on 'em is the right to his own private opinion. Now, my opinion is, that, except in business hours, an' on business matters, master and man should each mind their own, an' leave one another's alone. I don't want to say any more about it, for it's just nine o'clock, an' there's Mr. Ned a-comin'."

The old timekeeper at Carberry and Mills, chain-cable and anchor makers, Isle of Dogs, stood waiting by the half-open gate, barely acknowledging the cheery morning greeting of Ned Carberry as he strode past toward his office.

Eli Blake was a character—a man of pronounced views—as his concluding remarks in the above fragment of conversation with the foreman of the yard clearly indicates.

He was, too, a prudent man, believing that absolute discretion should obtain, as between man and woman; above all, between master and servant.

He was a widower, with one child, a daughter, and Elsie Blake knew quite enough of her father's "mental twist" (as his cronies termed the somewhat forcible expression of his opinions, socialistic and political) to abstain from injudicious indulgence in too much self-assertion.

She was both a good girl and a pretty; about eighteen, and, for one in her station, well-informed and refined above the average.

Old Eli had been for many years in the employ of Carberry and Mills; for so many, in fact, that he was looked upon, alike by master and by men, as an institution, a fixture.

All knew his little peculiarities, but, in consideration of his many other and more important sterling qualities—virtues, indeed—liked and respected him none the less because of them.

Ned Carberry would as soon have thought of abdicating his own throne as of doing without Eli Blake. While certainly not entirely sympathising with the old man's more extreme democratic views, he did more than tolerate them, in that he held himself to be a man of the people, and believed in the right application of the great law of brotherhood, as between man and man.

This, of course, was going a little ahead of Eli, who, probably, from long habit, had come to recognize the class dividing-line as being not only a necessity, but, in a limited sense, an advantage.

One thing troubled—greatly troubled—him; Elsie would not, or could not, show any inclination for neighbourliness with those of her own class.

This struck at the very root of his principles, for he thought he saw in it the outcome of a spirit of dangerous social ambition, fatal to the due cultivation of that which he conceived to be the proper pride of her caste.

About five years before, in his wife's lifetime, Elsie, then a mere child, had on a certain occasion, narrowly escaped death.

It was in this way:

She was in the habit of daily carrying her father's dinner to him at the yard. One day the horse attached to an empty waggon, just being driven through the gates, shied, bolted, and fell with a crash, as the cart, colliding with one of the gate-posts, overturned, and was smashed to splinters.

Elsie was immediately in the path of the animal, and but for the presence of mind of young Ned Carberry—then a stalwart youngster of sixteen, who chanced to be making his way towards the entrance—would inevitably have been either crushed by the wreckage, or knocked down by the infuriated horse.

She was too frightened, poor child, to move out of the way, and it was only when Ned rushed forward, and, taking her up bodily, threw her with all his strength on to one side, that she fully realised her peril.

The act of her preserver had bruised and pained her, but the physical consequences of Ned's timely exertion of boyish muscle soon passed; from that time forward Ned Carberry was her girlish hero, the one being in the whole world whom she accorded a large place in her warm little heart.

Soon after this incident, Eli and his wife decided, on account of her poor health, to send Elsie to some farmer relatives in the Midlands.

The originally proposed visit of a month lengthened

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out, however, from various causes, into one of years, terminating only with Mrs. Blake's death.

His wife gone, his hearth lonely, Eli craved for his child's companionship, and so it was that a week or two before the beginning of this little chronicle, Elsie returned to her old home in Nelson Street, Isle of Dogs.

It so happened that during the years of Elsie Blake's absence, Ned Carberry had gone abroad to see the world, returning on the death of his father to take his position as sole partner in Carberry and Mills.

There had been no Mills for many a long day; so many, and so long, that the dead and gone junior partner had come to be regarded as a mere myth or a musty tradition.

Her new duties as her father's housekeeper fully occupying her time and attention, Elsie now no longer brought him his midday meal, the ten-year-old son of the foreman of the yard, and a great favourite with old Eli, deputising for her.

Elsie, it may be said, had now developed into a perfectly lovely woman, with about her not one reminiscent mark of her sun-bonnet and pinafore days.

There was not much difference to be noted in Ned himself. True, he was bigger, stronger, and, if anything, kinder and more gentle even than he had been as a boy. But he was the same Ned—the same loveable nature to all who had ever known him.

It may be accepted as a fact that the incident of nearly five years before had long since died out of his recollection. Men are not like women; they see and hear so much, their interests and occupations are so varied, that unless it concerns them very closely they easily forget events, which a woman, naturally and by habit more introspective, and with greater opportunities for quiet musing, cherishes in the hiding-places of her memory, bringing them forth every now and again, for contemplation, and mental refreshment.

Ned Carberry knew that Eli Blake had a daughter, but as to what manner of girl she was, pretty or plain, good or bad, he had not the faintest idea.

With Elsie it was far different. She, it may safely be said, had never forgotten the big Eton-jacketted boy who, at the risk of his own life, had saved hers. From the day that she had erected the idol in her little "holy of holies," she had continued faithfully to worship at the shrine until now she was beginning to find, to her own shame and confusion of mind, that the image she had set up was the one thing on earth she most desired.

It was all very reprehensible, no doubt; and quite opposed to the principles set forth in the dominant clause of her father's creed.

She knew this, and dreaded sometimes lest he should discover her secret.

Perhaps he might never even have known of its existence, had it not been for two things, impossible of control—fate, so called, and the tongue of a mischievous woman.

I venture to qualify the word "fate," it being in my humble opinion, at the best, a doubtful quantity, and not by any means to be relied upon, for I, at least, hold it to be half-brother to "chance," a notoriously untrustworthy principle. This admitted, I prefer to assign the credit of that which followed to "the Providence that shapes our ends," regardless of anything we may humanly do to carve out our own destinies.

Providence, then, decreed that Ned Carberry should, on a certain sunny morning in August—for the sun shines sometimes in the Isle of Dogs—and while on his way to the works, see Elsie Blake at the parlour window tending her plants, and looking sweet enough to charm the heart out of the veriest churl, vowed to celibacy and sulky solitude.

At first he could not identify her; did not, indeed, know her from—Eve! Then, with a hesitating slowness born of indecision, he raised his hat, halting almost imperceptibly as he did so.

It was a tribute to a beautiful presence—nothing more—for it was not until he reached the end of the street that it flashed upon him who it really was.

"Elsie Blake, by all that's wonderful! Why, she would be rare among the rarest. I'm glad, even in ignorance, that I saluted her. It's a privilege to recognise beauty such as hers."

This was dangerous musing. That his thoughts, far from troubling him, afforded him the keenest satisfaction, was not wonderful, though it intensified the peril; and when he passed the timekeeper's lodge and smilingly gave a more than usually hearty "Good morning!" to old Eli, there could have been but one opinion as to the state and bent of his mind.

Elsie was certainly not so ignorant as to who he was, as he himself had been at sight of her. Woman seldom is; she reads where man spells—very often.

Yet was it all very unfortunate; for Elsie, socially barred, and conventionally shut out from all the ordinary sources of giving and receiving, could, after this gentle fillip to her imagination, but indulge in vague dreams, which might or might not remain with her, when she should, as assuredly she would, awake to life's sober realities.

The morning's *rencontre* in Nelson Street had not passed unnoticed, Eli Blake having been informed of it on his way home the same evening by a certain inquisitive busy-body.

"Well, what about it?" growled old Eli. "I've only got your word for it" (he hated this particular specimen of the tattling sisterhood). "For aught I know you may be mistaken. I can hardly believe Elsie would encourage any, even the slightest attention from Mr. Ned; she knows my sentiments too well."

"Oh! of course you can believe it or not, Mr. Blake, just as you like." This with a sniff and a toss of the not too tidy head. "It's no concern of mine, and——"

"Then don't bother your head about it," snapped Eli, interrupting her, at the same time pushing past the woman, and hurrying on his way.

"Old cat!" he said to himself, when free of his persecutor. "An' yet," for it rankled, spite of himself and his faith in his daughter, "it's possible—it's just possible. Well, if it should be true, I'll nip it in the bud, that's all. Mr. Ned wouldn't wrong me or mine, I'm sure of that, sure as death! but I want no fine gentleman son-in-law, not me! An' so I'd tell 'im 'imself if it came to the push."

That evening, over his tea, he expressed himself pretty plainly upon the matter, much to Elsie's confusion and distress.

"I wouldn't mess about at that parlor winder of a mornin', Elsie," he said, "if I was you; leastways, not till Mr. Ned's gone by. He may think he's pleasin' you by a kind word, or a nod, but it don't please me; an' so I tell you. There's nobody the world over like Mr. Ned, but—well, don't do it, my girl! don't do it!"

Elsie made no reply; the fact is that she was afraid

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to speak, lest her manner should betray her; so Eli concluded that she had understood him, and would respect his wishes.

Days went by, and though Ned Carberry saw Elsie no more at her window, he met her frequently in the neighbourhood, when, as he often now did, he strolled out from his duties for a "breath of fresh air," as he tried to deceive himself into believing.

The Isle of Dogs is far from being an ideal place for a ramble, even in fine weather, but Ned Carberry did not appear to find it at all depressing.

Oh! how delicious it all was—to Elsie, poor Elsie; as for Ned, he too thought it delightful, but experienced qualms of conscience with regard to the wisdom of it all.

Even then all might have been well; and two lives, though they might not each have the "moon," still might have secured something, in its way equally good, something, perhaps, in the end, more satisfying, and intrinsically of greater value.

This is as the world would think. I have my own opinion.

But the busy-body was not content with that which she had already achieved, viz., the implanting in old Eli's mind a disturbing element, that without doubt, would rankle and grow, to the ultimate upsetting of everybody concerned.

She must needs send round the marvellous tale, with embellishments and exaggerations; the gossips of the neighbourhood soon taking up the story, and making the most of it.

It was not surprising that that which the wives discussed, should soon became the common property of the husbands, and that a whisper, more or less emphatic, should in time reach the ears of old Eli.

The day that he heard it was one when Ned and Elsie had agreed to meet at noon.

There were some waste fields, and by some deserted chemical works. Huge boards, proclaiming that the land was to be let for building purposes, disfigured even the already uninviting prospect. It was of all dreary spots the most dreary. As a trysting-place for lovers I can imagine none less suitable.

But as everybody knows it is difficult to find rural or romantic spots in the Isle of Dogs; a place therefore, such as I have described would probably be, for that locality, rather above the average than otherwise.

It would be about half-past twelve, when Ned and Elsie, standing, absorbed in talk, in the shadow of the wall that girt the uninhabited factory, heard heavy footsteps aproaching on the cinder-path leaning to where they were.

Elsie saw him first and instinctively drew away from Ned's side.

"Oh, don't trouble yourself," said Eli, quietly but with a dangerous light in his honest old eyes. "Don't trouble yourself to move, I shan't disturb you for long. I've got something to say, and when I've said it I'll go my way, an'"—he looked keenly at her—"you can go yourn."

"Blake! you're under a misapprehension," cried Ned Carberry; "you're not treating your daughter fairly!"

"Ain't I? Then I'm sorry, mortal sorry. But I'm thinkin' that it's you as is mistaken, sir. However what I've got to say to you, Mr. Ned, I'll say when I've done with her."

Elsie moved nearer to Ned now, perhaps because she felt that soon he would be her only protector.

"Elsie Blake," continued the old man, each word coming sharp as a razor from his lips, "a week or so ago I told you plainly what I wished; and I had every reason to believe that you would obey me. I find now that I wer' over-trustin'. If you think that a marriage with my master will please me, or that you will reap good from it, I tell you that you will do neither. From this moment I've done with you! I never wish to see your face more! I'll provide for you away from my roof 'till you go to your husband, but in no other way. That's my last word to you."

"Mr. Blake!" broke out Ned Carberry, "you are unnatural."

"Am I? That's as it may be," answered Eli, still quietly. "I thought, sir, as you was a gentleman, an' as I've knowed you ever since you was a lad, as you was honest. It's not my fault as you're neither one or the other."

"Blake, you forget yourself!"

"No, Mr. Ned! it's you as 'as forgot yourself, an' take this from me: oil and water'll never mix. You know my meanin'. I leaves your service from to-night. Good-day to you, sir."

He turned and walked slowly back along the cinder-path, without so much as a head-turn, and went into his own house—alone.

* * * * *

Mr. and Mrs. Edward Carberry are to-day a fairly happy couple, but I fancy that the lady must often call to mind those last words of old Eli (she has never set eyes on him since that day), for at times her husband sees the tears in her eyes.

He never asks the reason, for he knows.

THE PALATE OF A WHELK.

A photograph of this appears in an article on the subject of the Anatomy of the Atom - - in the - -

JULY PEARSON'S.

NOW ON SALE 6d.

GALBRAITH OF St. ANSELM'S.

A story of Oxford and Undergraduates; of villainy and manhood; of shadows and sunshine. A story wherein is set forth the strange career of Galbraith of St. Anselm's—how shadowy mystery dogged his footsteps; how he suffered for the sins of another; how he was hounded out of college and university; how a faithful few stood by him; how, sometimes swept under, sorely battered and bruised, he never ceased to fight the fierce tide of adversity, and reached the shore at last! See next Thursday's issue of

THE BIG BUDGET. One PENNY.

"The Golden Dwarf" is simply enthralling.

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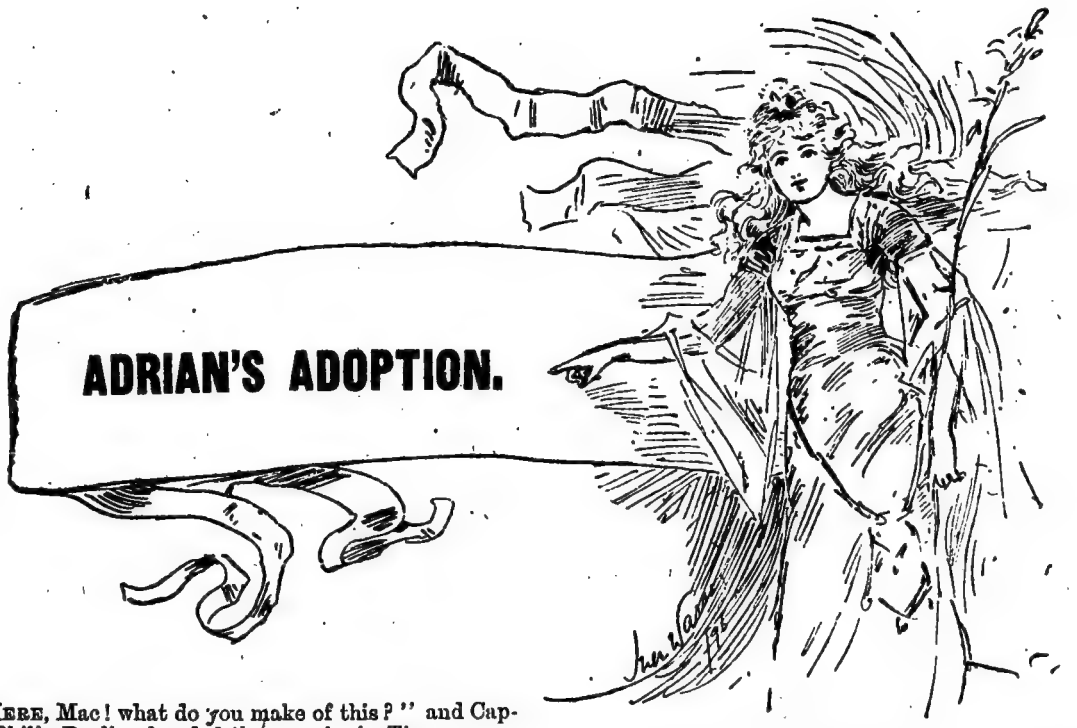

ADRIAN'S ADOPTION.

"HERE, Mac! what do you make of this?" and Captain Philip Darling handed the morning's *Times* across the breakfast-table, with a laugh, to his companion.

"Make of what?" echoed the major; Major Patrick MacIlray, V.C., a grizzled old Indian veteran, and a frequent visitor in the early hours at the captain's quarters.

"Ah! I see," he continued, nicely adjusting his pince-nez," and reading aloud the paragraph indicated by the other, which ran as follows:

> ADOPTION—Will any wealthy and benevolently-inclined bachelor or spinster adopt young couple, who have been many years engaged, but are unable to marry owing to lack of means. Address:—H. H., Box 1002, International Agency, Fleet Street. E. C.

"Well?" said the captain.

"H'm; can't say exactly, wants thinking over," said the major.

"Do you know what my opinion is about it?"

"No; what is it?"

"Rot!"

"Don't agree with you. May be genuine. Facts sometimes stranger than fic——"

"Not always. In such cases as this, for instance, it suspiciously inclines to the mendacious."

"I repeat, I don't agree with you, Phil, at any rate I intend investigating the thing."

"Nonsense! You're not serious! As sure as your name's Mac you'll be done if you have anything to do with it. You're too soft-hearted to undertake the *rôle* of investigator."

"Scoffer! avaunt! Frankly Phil, I've made up my mind to write to the male half of this advertising couple; and, according as I find, so will I act."

The major rose from the table with as much military precision and smartness as his years and the "gameness" of his right leg would admit of; then, asking his host for writing materials, he scribbled for a minute or two, and read aloud the following:

> IF "A. A." (the gentleman, not the lady) will call tomorrow afternoon, three o'clock, at subscribed address, he may hear of something to his advantage.
>
> MAJOR PATRICK,
> 64 Oxford Terrace,
> Oct. 5, 1900. Belgravia, SW.

"You mean business, then," said the other, scarcely able to restrain an amused smile.

"Of course! Why, sir, there's no knowing what prize I may get out of it; a—affection, and—and——"

"Disinterested affection; also, of course. Mac! Mac! you'll make a mess of it. Look here, old chap! I'm open to make a bet with you—a level 'tenner'—that within a fortnight—ten days—within a week from the sending of this letter you'll wish you hadn't."

"Done, you unbeliever, done! I'll leave you now; post this, and return on this day week to claim stakes. Ta-ta."

"Half a moment, Mac! Why Oxford Terrace, Belgravia, you don't live there?"

"No, but my man, that married last year, does. Benjamin and his wife are only too ready to oblige me; and it's very handy to have such a convenient field for operation."

"Yes, in the event of failure, and the necessity for backing out."

First posting his answer to the advertisement, the major made his way to Oxford Terrace, arranged matters then with Mrs. Benjamin, and strolled away to his club to await results.

He had desired that any letter for him, should be at

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once forwarded to the "Junior Military," by special messenger.

At eight p.m. a note was left at the club by Benjamin himself. It ran:

> Dear Sir.
> In reply to yours of this morning I beg to say that I shall have much pleasure in keeping the appointment made by you:
> Yours Faithfully
> Adrian Adkinson.

"He's lost no time, at any rate," said the Major to himself, "it now only remains to be seen what manner of man he is, and whether, as Phil seems to think he has any little game. The wish may be father to the thought but I don't believe he has."

When the next day at 3. p.m. punctually, the knocker was vigorously applied at Number 64, Major Mac, from an advantageous position behind the parlour window curtain had a good preliminary glimpse of his visitor.

He was young; he was well-dressed, and not by any means bad-looking. More than this the gallant "investigator" was unable to gather.

By the time the major had resumed his seat in an armchair by the fire, Mrs. Benjamin had announced Mr. Adrian Adkinson, and the owner of the name standing a moment in the doorway of the room, hat in hand, advanced towards the correspondent, who rose to meet him; bowed, and indicated a chair.

After an interchange of conventional courtesies, and a little diplomatic skirmishing on the Major's part to decide, if possible, motives and character indices, the following facts, or, waiting proof, what passed for such, were arrived at.

In the first place Ilma Dunthorpe, and Adrian Adkinson were not of the same "caste" socially—the latter admitted this in a way, but only as the result of a chance question of the major's. Evidently he would much rather have concealed the detail, being as he was, a young man of the vain, super-sensitive sort, much given to indulgence in wounded feelings, and the like.

It appeared that the lady, the daughter of parents moving in good society, was of artistic bent. A working student on certain days at South Kensington and elsewhere, she had met Adrian on various occasions. The son of people who had sacrificed much for his education and general advancement in life, young Adkinson had paid assiduous court to the girl, mainly as he was particularly anxious to impress upon his listener, because of her winsome personality. She, on her part was no less attracted by him, or, so, at least, he said.

With the usual drift of events in such cases, an engagement, secret for some time, followed. Then came trouble. A girl of fine principle, loyal-hearted, and straightforward to a degree, she confided in her mother, the issue being, a parental ultimatum, and a separation of interests.

Ilma possessed in her own right a small income of fifty pounds a year, and as she was of age, the disposal of it was in her own hands. A clever "black and white" artist, she calculated that her earnings in this connection, added to her own private resources, would enable her to circumvent the irrepressible wolf.

"But what first suggested to you the idea of advertising," asked the major.

"Oh! I don't quite know. I'm not very clever at money-getting, and didn't exactly relish the notion of living on my wife's means. Then I thought that there must be wealthy people in the world without kith or kin to absorb their good things, and so, I—we, I mean, decided to appeal to such in the forlorn hope that some one, man or woman, would see things in our light, and help us to help ourselves."

"Ah! now, suppose that I, willing and able to make your dream a substantial reality, adopt you; you, mind, open an account for you with a bank, and pave the way for your making a braver show on your side, would that suit your book, eh?"

"Well, Major Patrick, we—I thought that perhaps you would——"

"Do just as I have said. If, after certain inquiries made by me, I find everything satisfactory, you will be in the position of my adopted son, and able to meet your intended wife upon equal terms, or even more so. I don't understand women, and don't want to, which sufficiently explains my reason for dealing solely with you in the matter. It remains only for you to give me your address; the address of Miss Dunthorpe; and the name and whereabouts of someone to whom you have during your life been known."

Adrian Adkinson was only too ready to comply with these not unreasonable demands of the major, and left the house with the understanding that he was to call again at the same hour on the third day after.

He was more than satisfied with the result of the afternoon's work, but it was not until he was almost within hail of his own door, that there occurred to him something, which, had the major but even faintly suspected it, would have spoiled his success and prospects beyond redemption.

This was nothing less than repudiation of his obligations with regard to Ilma Dunthorpe. An idea, dim at first, began to take shape with him, that given a fair pecuniary status, a match, better and in every way more advantageous, was both possible and desirable. That such a course had in it the elements of mean, shifty trickery, and exposed him to an accusation of unmanliness and self-seeking, troubled him but little, not so much as crossed his mind even.

Poor Ilma was not a beauty, certainly; but there were compensations, that went a long way toward making that fact not worth mentioning.

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intelligence above the average, enshrined in a form slight, indeed, but graceful, and instinct with a vigour healthy, because altogether wholesome, go to make a woman worthy the name, then Ilma Dunthorpe was a notable example of that which is "above rubies."

Adrian Adkinson had lied when he told the major that his *fiancé* was cognisant of the advertisement. As a matter of fact she was entirely ignorant of it, and would probably have remained so had not fate decreed otherwise, in a way absolutely unexpected.

Meanwhile, the inquiries concerning the young man (conducted through the medium of the ever convenient Benjamin) resulted so far satisfactorily, that the major considered himself justified in fulfilling his part of the contract.

Probably, it may almost be said certainly, the old veteran was influenced quite as much by a desire to crow over his friend Philip, as by mere philanthropic motives. Either way Adrian Adkinson profited. The adopted son and presumable heir of a wealthy old bachelor, his position was to be envied.

The germ of crooked inclination, however, manifested itself as a suspicious suggestion, almost before the ink was dry upon the dead copy, and substantial cheque, which changed hands upon the day of the completion of the business.

A casual question put by the major to his brand-new legal connection set the ball a-rolling.

"I suppose you will at once acquaint Miss—a—Dunthorpe as to how matters stand with you?" he said.

"Ilma? Oh! she can wait! I've so many things to do, more important, that trifling affairs of that nature must give way."

"Oh! I beg pardon! I merely thought that the main object of our little arrangement was the doing away with the necessity for this same waiting."

"So it is, sir," answered Adrian, not exactly in a confused way, but in something very much like it, "but I think you'll agree with me, that since owing to your goodness, the cause for anxiety is virtually removed, there need be no immediate hurry."

"Well, no; perhaps not; although Miss Dunthorpe must still be, to some extent, affected by the anxiety you refer to, inasmuch as she is utterly ignorant of the fact that indulgence in it is now unnecessary. But, as I said, I don't understand women, and their ways, and so I'll leave you to manage your own personal concerns in that direction in your own way."

Adrian Adkinson was not clever enough to detect the wrapped-up satire, but departed in the happy frame of mind of one able now to make his little "paradise of self" quite comfortable, and impervious to the attacks of vulgar worry and inconvenient disturbance.

Had he seen, however, the Major's expression of disgustful dissatisfaction as the latter watched him cross the road, and disappear up the street, he would, without doubt, have felt uneasy; not because he need fear the withdrawal of his patron's bounty (that after the legal formalities was impossible) but because of the contempt and worse, which highminded men always have for double-dealing, and which most men instinctively wince under and dread.

Late that evening Captain Philip Darling received a visit from his old friend.

The captain was inclined to make chaffing inquiry of the major as to the progress of the advertisement matter, but the latter was not to be drawn.

"Phil, I want you to do me a favour."

"You know it's granted before asking. What is it Mac? Not money, I know; you've plenty of that; and even if you hadn't, it would be no use to come to me, would it? The exquisite sensation of 'wealth' is an experience *in futuro* as far as I'm concerned. Now, what is it?"

"Only that you will make a call for me."

"Where, when? Say the word, and it's done."

"I want you, if you've no other engagement, to call in a casual way to-morrow afternoon at 197 Warwick Street, S.W., and discover for me if Mr. Adrian Adkinson is at home or out. I'm curious to know. For certain reasons I can't go myself; neither can I send Benjamin, as the inquirer must be a gentleman."

"Oh, of course I'll do it for you. In fact, I've a little private business of my own in that neighbourhood. But, 'Adrian Adkinson,' who on earth is he?"

"Oh, someone in whom I am interested."

"All right, old chap! beg pardon! wouldn't probe secrets for the world."

"Thanks, Phil. I may depend upon you then."

"Certainly."

"Good-night," said the major.

On the following afternoon about four o'clock, Captain Philip Darling, stepping out of a hansom, knocked at 197 Warwick Street, S.W.

Truth to say, he was somewhat at a loss how exactly to do his private inquiry business.

As so very often happens, however, the difficulty was solved for him, in unexpected fashion.

About to put a leading question to the woman (evidently the landlady) who answered his summons, he he was interrupted by the advent of a young lady, hatted and jacketed, who, hurriedly descending the stairs and advancing along the hall-way towards the street door, stopped shortly at the mention of Adrian Adkinson's name. She had a crushed note in her hand, and Captain Philip could plainly see that she was excited, angry even.

"Excuse me," she said to him, "are you seeking Mr. Adkinson?"

"I certainly did wish to see him, had he been at home," replied Philip, impressed by the girl's appearance and manner.

"Are you a friend of his?" she queried, still in the same agitated way.

"Well, no, not exactly," he said, "I am acting for a friend of my own."

"Have you any objection to telling me your friend's name? I have a reason—a very strong reason for asking. My own name is Dunthorpe, Ilma Dunthorpe, and I am, or *was* engaged to Mr. Adkinson."

"Oh, indeed!" said Philip, in a courteously interested way—(they had left the house, and were walking along one side of Eccleston Square, into which they had turned out of Warwick Street.)—"There is no reason," he added, "why I should not tell you my friend's name. It is Major Patrick——"

"Mac Ilray. I thought so."

"Then you know him?"

"No, I have never seen him, Mr.—a——"

"Philip Darling," said he, producing his card case.

"Captain Darling," she said, just glancing at the pasteboard. "If you are a friend of Major Mac Ilray's you will tell me where I can find him, or, better still, take me to him at once. He only can make quite clear

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to me that which I have but now learnt in a very unsatisfactory way."

"I shall be pleased to take you to the major," said Philip, glancing down sideways at his companion, and beginning to think what a nice girl she was, and what an ass a man must be to say or do anything which should risk the losing such a treasure.

The day was fine and Philip, availing himself of the fact to the full, strolled with Ilma to the major's chambers in the "Albany."

He certainly lost no time in improving the acquaintance, and before the Park was reached they were chatting in the spirit of right good-fellowship.

She explained her presence in Warwick Street by saying that not having heard for some time from Adkinson, she had called at his lodgings to gain information about him.

The landlady had handed her a note from Adrian, ultimately permitting her to write a few lines in his sitting-room.

It was while she was thus engaged that a certain paper lying open on the table opened her eyes to her lover's dissimulation. Hence her agitation.

The same paper also made her acquainted with Major MacIlray's name, and share in the business.

Then light broke for Captain Philip. Unknown to his old friend he had stumbled across the latter's studiously preserved secret. He laughed joyously to himself; promising himself a rare treat when he should reveal his knowledge.

There is not much more to say.

Ilma Dunthorpe, in her interview with the Major, got to the bottom of Adrian's treachery, as towards herself; first in concealing the fact of the advertisement from her, and making her unconscious partner in his scheme for raising the wind, and then, when success was achieved, casting her aside, as something undesirable in his prosperity.

Fortunately, Major MacIlray's fortune could stand the comparatively small strain upon it of the money he had so impulsively settled upon Adrian. A growl or two, and he passed it to the "loss" account with as good a grace as might be.

But still more fortunately, he saw that Phillip and Ilma made common cause.

No word of love, so far as he at least knew, had as yet passed between them, but these were sure indications that the word would be spoken, and soon.

With regard to that "tenner," there was a decided unanimity of opinion; both agreeing that in the broadest sense, there had been no failure, although upon the face of it the word was to a certain extent plainly written.

The bet, therefore, was by mutual consent cancelled, both parties to it being more than satisfied.

The Major found a good wife for his favourite; and Philip rejoiced in the possession of the love of as true and sweet a nature as ever gladdened man's heart and life.

* * * * *

Adrian Adkinson has recently been heard of. Upon the list of passengers on the *Teutonic*, for New York, he and his wife prominently figure.

It is supposed that he was actually married at the time Ilma discovered his deceit, deceit which has so happily resulted for herself.

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HOW "SPIKE" BEALE LOST HIS NERVE.

"Spot the big cove in the corner—'im wi' the beard!"

It was Joe Egan, an old convict with whom I had become acquainted, who whispered these words in my ear as I sat alongside him in the parlour of the "Brown Bear."

The tavern in question is grimy and exceedingly ancient, and is situated in one of Hoxton's worst streets—a street through which no respectable person willingly passes after nightfall.

A favourite resort of criminals who infest the neighbourhood is "The Bear," and oft-times has its secret loft afforded refuge to desperate cracksmen being hunted by the men of Scotland Yard. How old Ben Draffin, the landlord, secured his licence in the first instance, and how he manages to get that license regularly renewed, is not easy to understand, seeing that the police are well aware of the character of Ben's principal customers.

I had visited the place twice before under the guidance (and protection) of Joe Egan. On the night of this, my third visit, a kind of benefit was going to be held in aid of a pickpocket's young widow, and as the hour at which the proceedings were to commence was close at hand, the low-ceilinged parlour was unwontedly crowded.

It was curious company to be in—this gathering of evil-visaged criminals. Burglars, swell-mobsmen, pickpockets, representatives of almost every branch of crime, in fact, stood or sat about in little groups, drinking, and laughing together. Roughly dressed for the occasion though I was, each new arrival regarded me suspiciously, until a signal from my companion reassured them that I was "all right."

Absorbed in watching the faces of those around me I was suddenly aroused by the remark from Joe Egan which I have set forth above. Looking in the direction indicated, I at once espied the individual referred to—a man of herculean build and bloated face, the lower part of which was adorned with a bushy red beard.

"Ain't exac'ly o' the burglar cut, is he?" my acquaintance quietly observed. "That's 'is lay, though—or *was* 'is lay is, p'r'aps, nearer the mark. For 'e aint any good at anythin' but warehouse-breakin' jobs nowadays. He used to be a tip-topper, too, fer all 'is awk'ard make. Wouldn't touch nothin' but the best jobs, Spike Beale wouldn't—until he lost 'is nerve."

I took another look at the big, bearded man in the corner. Though bull-necked and of unpleasing-enough countenance, he was totally unlike the typical Bill Sikes. His huge, clumsy-looking figure, too, was not exactly adapted to a "profession" which, above all things, requires agility. I noticed another failing. His hand, as he raised a glass of spirits to his twitching mouth, trembled violently—a sure sign of "nerves."

"No, it 'aint the rum," muttered Egan, reading my thoughts. "Until the night o' that job t'other side of the Thames, Spike Beale could drink a pint neat, an' 'is nerves be as steady as steel arter it."

Then, speaking in low tones, and breaking off now and again to join in the choruses, or applaud the performers, my companion related how "Spike" Beale lost his nerve. He told the story in his own way. For the better understanding of my readers I here re-tell it in mine.

* * * * *

The neighbouring clocks had just struck one a.m. and the dense November fog which had been hanging over South London for nearly twelve hours obscured everything like a pall. Under the wall of a large detached house, standing some way back from a lonely suburban road, two men crouched. They seemed not to mind the weather at all. Indeed, to judge by their conversation, the state of the atmosphere appeared to afford them the liveliest satisfaction.

"Couldn't 'a bin better, Spike!" said one of the pair. "The cop won't be by again fer another hour, an' you might light the 'ouse up an' then 'im not see a glimmer from the road 'ere."

"Yes, it's turned out well. But keep a sharp look, all the same. Now give me a lift."

The speaker, a bearded, immensely powerful-looking man, clutched the top of the surrounding wall, and, with the assistance of his comrade, pulled himself up. Then, with the parting injunction, "Keep yer eyes open," he dropped into the garden of the lonely house.

Cautiously picking his way along, he advanced for about twenty yards, then halted for a moment as the house itself loomed into view. All was dark within, the occupants being apparently fast asleep in their beds. From the pocket of his capacious coat "Spike" Beale—for that notorious burglar it was—now produced

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a small lantern, ready lighted. Then he tip-toed to the rear of the house, finally halting before a window.

Five minutes later, he was standing inside the kitchen, his keen eyes taking in every article exposed to view. Apparently coming to the conclusion that there was nothing there worth stealing, Beale crept softly along a passage until, reaching the dining-room door, he turned the handle and entered.

Here he found a small quantity of silver-plate, which he promptly wrapped up in a cloth and placed in the passage. Then he returned and commenced to force open sundry drawers and cabinets. Their contents evidently disappointed him, for, muttering an oath, he crept out of the room and entered another on the opposite side of the passage. This apartment contained nothing of a portable, and at the same time valuable, nature, save a marble clock and a few richly-chased ornaments. These he placed in the passage with the plate, and muttering, "Jewellery and money in the bedrooms, I expect," immediately ascended a broad flight of stairs.

Reaching the landing, he hesitated for a second, listening intently. Not a sound did he hear.

A door on his left stood ajar. Pushing it open he found himself in a small but well-furnished bedroom. It was unoccupied, and was evidently kept ready for the use of any visitor who might have occasion to stay at the house for a night. A rapid search satisfied Beale that it was no use wasting time in the room; so, with the swiftness of the experienced housebreaker, he now glided along a passage which ran at right angles from the landing.

Again he halted at a door, and this time placed his ear to the keyhole. There was no sound of any occupant.

"Rummy!" mused the burglar. "The servant's out fer the night, but the family' at home, Poulter said, and from his plan o' the 'ouse this ought to be the boss's room. Can't 'ear no breathin,' though!"

Once more he stooped and listened; then covering the glass of his lantern, tried the door. To his surprise it was not locked.

Beale pushed the door open an inch or two, and listened a third time. As before, all was silent as the grave; so deciding that Poulter—the confederate who had arranged the "job" and prepared a rough plan of the house—had either been misinformed as to the location of the principal bedroom, or that the family *were* away for the night, the buglar boldly entered.

Uncovering his lantern, the first things he espied were several articles of jewellery lying upon a dressing-table near the window. His eyes glistened greedily. Then the thought flashed on him that in a room where watches and rings lay about there must be occupants, and, shading his lantern with his hand, he turned to take a general survey of the room.

He glanced at the bed, and the sight which met his gaze almost caused him to shriek aloud with terror. His eyes bulged from their sockets, his tongue and lips grew suddenly parched, while his whole attitude was that of a man stricken with palsy.

For, side by side in the bed, lay a woman and a little child—dead—with their throats cut!

Beale stood horror-stricken for several minutes. Try as he might he could neither move nor take his eyes from the awful sight.

Then suddenly the spell was broken by the sound of a footstep behind him, and, turning, he saw standing in the doorway a man as tall and powerfully-built as himself, holding in his hand a razor, the blade of which was dyed a deep crimson.

But it was the man's eyes which struck terror to the burglar's heart. They were bloodshot, and in the dim light emitted by Beale's lantern glowed like live coals.

For a moment the two stood gazing at each other, then the man uttered a horrible laugh, and, with razor uplifted, sprang furiously at the burglar. Dodging just in time, Beale avoided a vicious slash, and, dropping his lantern, closed with his antagonist.

In the black darkness there then commenced a battle of giants.

Both men were, as has been said, of great proportions, and both were of about the same age. It was a silent struggle, save for the horrible panting of the two antagonists as each vainly tried to overpower the other. To and fro in that chamber of death they struggled, until at length Beale felt muscular fingers gripping his throat, and, half choking, he was borne backwards and pinned against the wall.

The burglar was now powerless to struggle, and feeling the clutch on his windpipe tighten, he had given himself up as doomed, when suddenly the other relinquished his hold, and, chuckling strangely, began to fumble about the floor for his dropped razor.

Like lightning, Beale slipped past him, and, half mad with terror, hurried downstairs and out of the house. The fog was still dense, and he did not hesitate to reach the road by way of the front gate. Near at hand he found his accomplice waiting in some alarm, and to him Beale briefly recounted what had happened.

On the following day the evening papers were filled with accounts of "A Horrible Tragedy in South London," in which were set out the fact that a well-to-do gentleman had, in a sudden fit of madness, murdered his young wife and child, and afterwards committed suicide.

They dwelt at length on one mysterious point, viz., that although the victims were found lying in positions which testified to their having been murdered in their sleep, the room showed unmistakable signs of a violent struggle having taken place. To account for the fact that the murderer's clothes were disarranged and torn, it could only be surmised that he had roamed about the house in a wild frenzy before cutting his own throat.

Another curious thing about the terrible affair was the discovery that burglars must have visited the house, seeing that the kitchen window was found to have been forced, while a bundle of plate lay in the passage as though it had been dropped there by housebreakers.

* * * * *

"Since that night," concluded Joe Egan, "Spike Beale's nerve 'aint bin worth a brass farden. Whether it was the sight o' the murdered wife an' babby, or the narrer escape 'e 'ad o' bein' choked by the madman that give 'im sich a fright as 'e can't git over, I dunno. But that it was one o' the two there 'aint a doubt. 'E trembles an' sweats whenever 'e sees a copper in the street, an' can't be got to jine anybody in a private 'ouse plant.

"Altogether 'e's got a bad look-out afore 'm. Ware-'ouse breakin' don't show much profit—the fences git all that. Besides, I'm thinkin' that if 'e goes on swillin' the rum like 'e's bin doin' fer the last few months, even ware'ouse jobs'll soon be too much fer Spike."

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Short Stories That . . . . . Make You Laugh.

We devote every week space in *Short Stories* to pithy, humorous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a Stereoscope to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case, the source MUST be stated. Attempts must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, July 8th. Postcards only, please. The first prize of One Guinea has been awarded this week to Miss A. Clark, 35 Palace Grove, Bromley, Kent, whose contribution is denoted by a star thus.*

"ANYTHING fresh this morning?" asked the gossip. "Only that paint you are leaning against," replied the bored man, with a yawn.

"DON'T you hate to hear unpleasant things people say about you?" "No, I feel in luck that I don't have to know the unpleasant things they think about me."

BROWN: "Do you suppose I'll ever make a good golf-player?" Todd (pityingly): "Never, old man. You think too much of your family, and your business."

"THEY say a carrier pigeon will go farther than any other bird," said the boarder, between bites. "Well, I'll have to try one," said the landlady. "I notice a fowl doesn't go far!"

"WHAT two things," exclaimed the orator, "are helping mankind to get up in the world?" "The alarum-clock and the step-ladder," answered somebody in the rear of the hall.

TAILOR: "We came, your lordship, to ask you to pay your bill. We cannot wait any longer because we have not been able to pay our own bills for cloth for three months." His lordship: "Well, I declare—you fellows incur debts and then you come to me for money to pay them. What impudence!"

RETURNED TROOPER: "Clara, you were engaged to me, and yet I hear that while I was at the front you went out often with that old admirer of yours." Clara: "Oh, George, he was so thoughtful, and I was so anxious that he took me every night to the—er—War office—to see—er—if you were killed!"

"OH, we had the loveliest arrangement at our bazaar last week! Every woman contributed to the missionary cause one pound, which she earned herself by hard work." "How did you get yours?" "From my husband." "I shouldn't call that earning it yourself by hard work." "You don't know my husband."

*A NEGRO boy was a great favourite with his master, but whenever he committed a fault, his master gave him a note to carry to the overseer, directing that he should be whipped. The boy soon noticed that whenever he took the piece of paper he got punished. He spoke to his master about it. His master said: "Oh, the paper tells the overseer that you are idle and neglect your work." "Why, massa," said the boy, "I never see you work." "Not with my hands, certainly," said his master, "but I work with my head, which is much more difficult." The next time he was sent with a note to the overseer he threw it away. His master asked what the overseer said. "Nothing at all," said the boy, "I did not go to him; I worked with my head this time."

MEN of the Time—Watchmakers.

MANY people settle their debts like clockwork—tick, tick, tick.

THE ability of the gas company to make both ends meet depends on the meter.

"THIS is two bad!" exclaimed the tram conductor when he received his second bad shilling.

"I SEE your husband is trying to read without glasses." "Yes, he will persist in making a spectacle of himself."

"OUR yacht was beaten by a despicable trick." "Why, how?" "Woman in balloon sleeves stood on the deck of the other boat."

POSSIBLY what makes it more annoying and painful is, whatever he does for man, the mosquito presents his bill before beginning work.

CYCLIST. "Is this a safe hill, my man? Do cyclists meet accidents here?" Rustic: "Oh, no, sur; it's quite safe—they all walk down it."

"'ERE, capting, won't yer give us a copper? I'm that 'ungry——" "Why don't you work?" "Well, cos that 'u'd only make me more 'ungry."

DICK SINGLETON: "Does your wife object to your going to the club of an evening?" Benny Dictus: "No, but she objects to my coming home from it in the morning."

MISS ANTEEK: "He is the most insulting man I ever met." The Brother: "Did he ask you how old you were?" Miss Anteek: "No; he asked me how old I said I was."

"WHAT makes you look so worn and dreary,
As if you were quite tired of life?"
"Alas!" he sighed, in accents dreary,
"I've just been shopping with my wife."

JONES has come into Brown's and is looking about the walls. Suddenly he pauses before a sketch. "I say, Harry," he says, "where did you get that?" "Why, I got it out of my head." "Well, it's lucky for your head that you got it out."

FLOSSIE is six years old. "Mamma," she called one day, "if I get married will I have to have a husband like papa?" "Yes," replied the mother with an amused smile. "And if I don't get married will I have to be an old maid like Aunt Kate?" "Yes." "Mamma"—after a pause—"its a tough world for us women, isn't it?"

A PROFESSOR in a medical college called the attention of his class to a man who had applied for medical advice. "Now, gentlemen," said the professor, "will you be kind enough to look at this patient closely, and see if you can tell what is the matter with him? Look at his eyes, the shape of his head, the expression of his features. You detect nothing. I do not wonder at it, for, gentlemen, let me assure you that it requires many years of actual experience to detect at a glance the malady of the patient. I am no more acquainted with this man than you are, yet as soon as I looked at him, I saw that he was a deaf mute." The students indulged in exclamations of admiration. As soon as these had subsided, the supposed deaf mute opened his mouth and spoke: "I say, gov'nor. I hope you will excuse me, but it's my brother who is deaf and dumb. He is outside waiting to know if he shall come in. Shall I fetch him?"

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CALL OR WRITE.

Allen Foster & Co.

THE LONDON MANUFACTURERS

CALL OR WRITE.

ALFOSCO REGD

BUY DIRECT BY PARCEL POST FROM THE LEADING FIRM OF LONDON MANUFACTURERS.

DESIGN No. 1045. 10/6.

New Corded Flounce Skirt.—The Fashionable Costume Skirt of the Season. Lined throughout with linenette. The flounce is 16in. deep and trimmed round with rows of the new cording now so fashionable. Made in the **Specialite Serge** and also in the **Venetian Cloth.** Colours: Black, Navy, Grey, Purple, Green, Drab, Fawn, Brown, Royal, Cardinal, etc. Price **10/6.** Sent carriage paid, 5d. extra. This Skirt can be had in good **Alpaca** same price. Colours: Black, Grey, and Fawn.

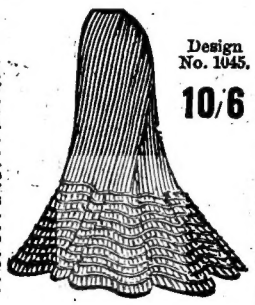
Design No. 1402.

11/6

DESIGN No. 1402.

11/6.

The New Eton Costume.—A smart and fashionable Costume for Summer and Seaside wear. Made in the **Specialite Serge** and **Venetian Cloth.** Colours: Black, Navy, Grey, Fawn, Brown, Royal, Cardinal, Green, etc. (patterns post free). The smartly-cut coat has a pretty shaped collar, which is trimmed with narrow braid. Costume complete **11/6.** Carriage, 6d. extra. The Skirt by itself, **6/6**; carriage, 5d. This Costume can be had in good **Alpaca** (lined throughout) for **21/-** Great Value.



Design No. 1045.

10/6

DESIGN No. 384.

11/6.

A Fashionable Costume with the New Flounce Skirt. Made in ALLEN FOSTER & CO.'S **Specialite Serge** or **Venetian Cloth.** Colours: Black, Navy, Fawn, Grey, Royal, Brown, Red, and Green (patterns free). The bodice is tight-fitting, and tastefully trimmed with braid. The Skirt is well and carefully made, and has a 16in. flounce, which is lined linenette. An excellent Costume for **11/6.** Carriage paid, 6d. extra. The skirt by itself will be **6/6.** Carriage, 5d. This Costume in bright Alpaca (lined throughout) will be **21/-** Colours: Black, Grey, Blue, or Fawn.

Design No. 384.

11/6

ALLEN FOSTER & CO., The London Manufacturers,

47 GOLDEN LANE, BARBICAN, LONDON, E.C.

2/9 CHALLENGE TO THE WORLD—OUR WARRANTED **TIMEKEEPER,** **2/9**

With a guarantee to keep correct time for three years, will be sent to any address on receipt of P.O. or stamps value 2/9, and three stamps extra for postage. To every purchaser during this month we give with it ABSOLUTELY FREE a strong Mexican SILVER CHAIN. All we ask of you is to show them to your friends, as by doing so you advertise our business.

GENEVA WATCH IMPORTERS,
148 Old Street, London, E.C.
(Please mention paper.)

NOSE A. LEES RAY, South Castle Street, Liverpool, is a Specialist on Ugly and Red Noses. Send stamp for particulars of his Patent Scientific Nose Improver. Medically approved. Red Nose Cure, 3/9. Pamphlet, "Cause and Prevention," 1/-. Machines for Prominent Ears. Blackhead Cure 1/9.

DRUNKENNESS

CURED. This can be done with or without patient's knowledge. Send me a stamp and I will tell you how. (Send no money.) Address, in confidence, Mrs. C. H. (Room 8), 195 Oxford Street, London, W.

The only Efficacious Substitute for Cod Liver Oil.

Devonshire Cream

(Really Genuine).

In patent air-tight tins. ½lb., 1/4; 1lb., 2/4; 2lb., 4/-: including tin & postage.

MRS. CONYERS,
Morchard Bishop,
DEVON.

A LITTLE GIRL'S PRETTY FROCK

can be made by any lady who follows carefully the Paper Pattern and Instructions

GIVEN AWAY

with every copy of

HOME NOTES

Published on Thursday (No. 391).

The Best and Daintiest of Ladies' Journals. You should order a Copy at once.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

Mr. GEO. R. SIMS'

HAIR RENEWER

Called by him **"TATCHO"**

(Romany: "GENUINE," "GOOD," "TRUE.")

And why, pray, is the successful poet, playwright, and journalist an eminent authority on hair restorer? Eager for an explanation a *Daily Mail* representative sought out Mr. Sims. . . .

Now Mr. G. R. Sims, as many people know, is one of the busiest men in the kingdom, but hastily affixing his signature to a letter, he looked up and extended a characteristically cordial welcome. Then he said, "I will explain. I found that I was rapidly going bald. Not seriously, you understand, but the thinning out was sufficiently marked to set me thinking out a remedy. I went to two specialists, both of whom cheerfully assured me that I should be absolutely bald in two years.

Then I discovered the preparation which is now placed upon the market. I found that I had hit upon a remedy capable of working wonders. Look at my hair now, isn't that convincing evidence of the value of my preparation?

"Ladies confirm my good opinion of it as a dressing for daily use. Mrs. Brown-Potter, whose beautiful hair is the admiration of the entire lady world, writes that she uses nothing but 'Tatcho.' There is nothing to prevent every woman from making her hair silken in texture and bountiful in volume, for she can obtain a bottle of 'Tatcho' now in every town or even village."

In order that the public may be able to test the superlative value of Mr. George R. Sims discovery, the Company is issuing large 4/6 size test bottles post free for **1/10,** under plain cover, one of which may be had on application. Please cut off the corner of this advertisement where marked and send with name and address, legibly written to the—

GEO. R. SIMS CO.,
81c Great Queen Street,
LONDON, W.C.

Mr. Geo. R SIMS'
HAIR RENEWER
4/6 Large Bottle **1/10**
POST FREE.
COUPON S.S, July 6, 1901.

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THE EDITOR'S PAGE.

A chorus of hearty approval has followed the reading of the opening chapters of "The Golden Dwarf." From various parts of the kingdom complimentary letters have come, showing the most cordial appreciation of Mr. Norman Silver's great story.

Now, on this matter of appreciation, I want to have a little candid talk with you. As you can readily understand, the weekly supply of thirty-two pages of high-class fiction entails a heavy expense on the editorial exchequer. I am not going to grumble at that. My policy has ever been, *give the readers the best, cost what it may.*

In these fiercely competitive days quality must inevitably tell, and when you compare *Short Stories* with the trash that many papers contain you will readily agree that we have quality as well as quantity.

I want you to help us to recoup ourselves for the very heavy outlay which this production entails. Now, don't pull out your cheque books. I am not starting a subscription list—all you have to spare in that way you can send to the Fresh Air Fund.

What I want you to do is to each get me a new reader. You can do this easily. All you need do is to hand to a friend the number containing the opening chapters of the new serial, with a hint to him to read it. The story itself will do the rest. If you don't care to *hand* anybody your copy, post it, or leave it in a train or omnibus. But do do something.

❦❦❦

Don't read the foregoing and then forget all about it. Just give a thought to your poor editor, whose whole life is spent in trying to please you, and really make an attempt to get him a new reader.

N.B.—In order not to place limitations on your energies, it may be wise to state that you may get *two, three,* or more new readers if you think fit.

❦❦❦

"Weighty."—A French doctor has pointed out that several fallacies are common with regard to the weight of the human body. The man who congratulates himself on his gain of several pounds in weight over a given period may have no cause for rejoicing, for he may be under a delusion. Very few people, says this French investigator, have any correct idea of their own weight. As a rule, the correctness of his scale may be taken into account, the time which has elapsed since eating, etc.

As a matter of fact, the weight of the body is continuously changing, owing to innumerable influences. On a warm day, after breakfast, a man will lose more than a third of a pound per hour. Seventy per cent. of the body consists of water, and thus its weight must vary with the transpiration of moisture.

Therefore, the inferences drawn from the loss or gain of a pound or two may be mistrusted. Fluctuations of a few ounces per day are a sign that the body is in a healthy state.

❦❦❦

The following is declared to be the work of a pupil in an English elementary school:

"Seamen are what we call sailors, and captains, and training-ship boys. The sailors you see in the streets are nice little fat men, with red and brown faces. They ware boys' coats and hats, and their trousers are too tite for them up above and too wide for them down below. It makes them feel very riled. Sailors don't ware colars, becose their necks are so thick; and they always have their boots blacked for fear the captain might see them round a corner. They don't carry their best close in boxes, but they ty them up in big red and blue handkerchiefs, just like Christmas puddens.

"Sailors are very fond of their mothers and sisters, and you neerly always see them taking them out to walk. The reason why sailors like to get drunk is becose it makes them roll about like as if they were on the ocheant."

❦❦❦

"Ring-master."—It is said that the origin of the modern circus dates back to about 1770. At that time a discharged English soldier, named Philip Astley, improvised a ring at Lambeth, London, and gave them exhibitions of horsemanship. His success was very great, and soon afterwards he built a rude circus near Westminster Bridge. There was no roof over the original structure, except that part occupied by the spectators; the ring was in the open air. His wife took part in the performance, being the first woman to enter the arena. This venture was so successful that Astley was able, in 1780, to put up a large and handsome amphitheatre. It was burned down three times, each time being immediately rebuilt.

❦❦❦

"Mabel" sends me a question which on arriving at this office was eagerly discussed by all the younger members of the staff.

"Why is kissing so pleasant?" she asks.

Well, my chief assistant editor, who is of a scientific turn of mind and a great osculatory expert says that it "is because the teeth and lips are full of nerves, and when the lips of persons meet an electric current is generated."

The Joke Editor confirms this view and remarks:

"Yes, and it is so cheap. You don't have to have a dynamo machine nor a battery in the house, nor a call box, nor a button to touch to ring up the central office, and there is no patent on it, and the poorest person in the world can enjoy the electric current as well as the millionaire, and it never gets out of order. If Edison had invented kissing it would cost £20 a year, like the telephone, and then extra kissing would be charged up extra, and if you didn't pay for it they would take out your kissaphone and disconnect you from the central office."

As for my own opinion, being a poor, lone bachelor, I can venture none.

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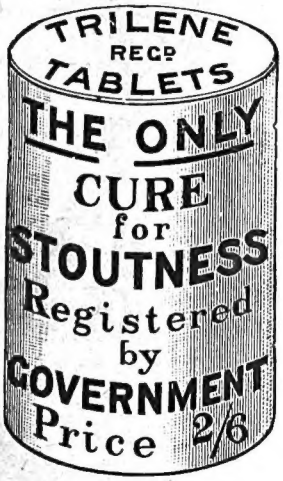
ALL FAT PEOPLE

Can be CURED by taking

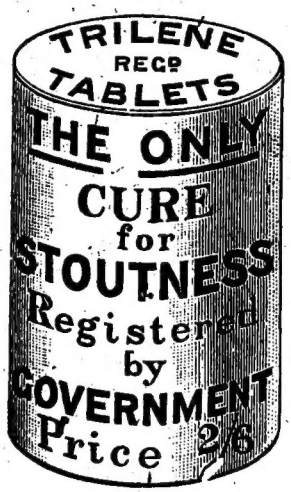
TRILENE TABLETS Regd.



For a few weeks. They will safely REDUCE WEIGHT and CURE CORPULENCY PERMANENTLY, whether Abdominal or General. They are small, agreeable, harmless, sent privately, and never fail to Improve both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of Diet.

An English Countess writes: "Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."

Send 2s. 6d. to THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.



SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1899.

Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks, and if I can do anything to promote your interests I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

MRS. DARNLEY SMITH, Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, writes: "Trilene Tablets have reduced my weight very much. I am so much lighter in every way, and better in health."

COUNTESS SECKENDORFF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

MISS CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st., and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

"77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, February 5th, 1898.

"Gentlemen,—I have not quite finished the box of Tablets and am 21lb. lighter. The change is great, and several friends are beginning the treatment, which not only reduces fat but strengthens rheumatic joints—such has been the case with me.

"Yours sincerely, M. A. HEYWOOD."

MRS. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

MISS NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Bisholm Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

"West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

MR. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets, which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

MRS. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

MR. MCLEOD, 44 Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. H. COX, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 14 stones."

Mr. WALKER, 236 London Road, Hazelgrove, Stockport, says: "I have used one box and am 14lb. lighter. Send another soon as possible."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs., says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mrs. E. ALEXANDER, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They have reduced me quite 2 stone, and I am now quite cured."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 23. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess FURSTENBERG, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

Mrs. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver, nr. Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

Mrs. TAYLOR-ROBINSON, of Tweed Green House, Whalley Range, Manchester, says: "I feel so much lighter and better since taking your Tablets, and am so much thinner that I hardly recognise myself."

Miss A. LONG, of 9 South Parade, Waterford, writes: "Your Tablets have reduced me 14lb."

Miss A. DAWSON, 62 Orchard Street, Weston-super-Mare, says: "Glad to say the Tablets have sufficiently reduced me. I shall always recommend them."

Miss F. L. BALL, 47 Chesterfield Road, St. Andrews, Bristol, writes: "I am quite cured through your Tablets. They improve the figure, and greatly relieve shortness of breath."

Miss PATIENT, of Woodberry, Theydon Bois: "Feel great benefit from Tablets. I have lost 2st., and am sufficiently reduced."

Mrs. DREW, of 1 Bellevue Gardens, The Nursery, Devizes, writes: "I took Tablets some years ago; they soon reduced me and I have not got stout since. Send me a box for my mother."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT, LONDON.

"AN OUNCE OF FACT IS WORTH A SHIPLOAD OF ARGUMENT,"

and it is an acknowledged, well-proven fact that **BEECHAM'S PILLS** are an absolutely unrivalled remedy for

Bilious Attacks, Nervous Disorders, Liver Complaints, Indigestion, and many Kindred Ailments.

Therefore
Don't be misled by the "shiploads" of specious "argument" advanced by those interested in the sale of untried preparations of mushroom growth. Remember

BEECHAM'S PILLS

have been tried and trusted over **50** years. The annual sale exceeds Six Million Boxes, and in spite of all competition they become more popular every day, and this is not due to "Argument" and persuasion, but to the fact that

THEY RECOMMEND THEMSELVES.

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If you are in doubt, procure copies of **BEECHAM'S PHOTO-FOLIO,** and they will help you to decide both where to go and what to see when you get there. The series has been published in book form, arranged in local combination, each book containing **24** Photographic Reproductions of well-selected views of the most interesting objects and places of historical and architectural interest, and the choicest bits of scenery and beauty in each district. The series consists of nearly **3,000** views, which are beautifully reproduced on specially-prepared English-made art paper. One hundred and twenty volumes now on sale. **PRICE ONE PENNY** Each Book.

A great publishing success, being the most complete series of views of the British Isles yet placed within reach of the people. Seven millions of these books have been printed since January, 1897.

All the volumes of BEECHAM S PHOTO-FOLIO should be obtainable from any Stationer or Bookseller, but if you have any difficulty in obtaining your requirements send post-card for list of places to

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